

**Easton Bavents c.1450-c.1680:  
a microstudy of the rise, fortune and decline of  
a maritime community experiencing dynamic  
coastal change**

**by**

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**Thesis submitted for the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**

**University of East Anglia (UEA)**

**School of History**

**September 2024**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to provide a detailed examination of Easton Bavents, a late medieval and early modern coastal community in rural Suffolk, experiencing the global issues of erosion, accretion and flooding. The micro-focused approach addresses the current lack of such a study with a structure driven by the surviving categories of documentation: wills; maps, sea charts and written navigational aids; lay subsidy returns; manorial records; and port and customs accounts.

Through a partial reconstitution, a definite correlation is established between fluctuations in Easton's economic fortunes and topographical changes. Positive outcomes from coastal realignment allowed the development of a haven, resulting in the community's remarkable economic and demographic rise in the mid to late fifteenth century, during a period of national and regional recession, decline and decay. Related to this was a concentration of entrepreneurial alien immigrants, many from Brabant and Zeeland, identified between c.1440 and 1524 who developed close kinship ties. Merchants and shipmen facilitated wide ranging maritime enterprises, including coastal trading, Icelandic fishing voyages and wool trading with the Calais Staple via London. A pilgrimage site dedicated to St Margaret of Antioch, with associations to poet Osborne Bokenham, developed, along with an enlightened group of clergy. However, during the sixteenth century further dynamic coastal changes, related to the loss of a sheltering sandbank, resulted in severe accretion, erosion and flooding. A swift decline of the community followed.

Through the experience of the author's archivist background this thesis offers research techniques applicable for the study of communities where physical remains and extant material are sparse. It enhances the growing knowledge base of England's emergence as a global maritime power and highlights the economic importance of immigrants. Finally, reconstructing the complexities of dynamic coastal change and human responses in past times informs the current debate on coastal erosion.

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## **Acknowledgments**

I am deeply indebted to my main supervisor, Professor Mark Bailey for his knowledge and expertise, freely given and shared. He has offered valuable feedback, and his many red lines have forced me to address my errors. Any which remain I take responsibility for. I am also indebted to Dr Jon Gregory at UEA for having the courage to accept my research proposal and for virtually holding my hand through the first difficult 'Covid' year of study. Thanks also to Dr Milly Cockayne for her advice and perspective on the personal stories within a subject which all too often is written from the political and economic point of view.

Special thanks to my fellow PhD students, Viv Aldous, Maurice Brenner and Anne McGee who have been a source of moral support throughout this journey. Thanks also to those who have freely given advice and help when asked; Nicholas Amor, Keith Briggs, Ivan Bunn, David Butcher, James Fiske, Rosemary Hoppitt, Tom Johnson, Craig Lambert and Susan Maddock and sincere apologies to any person I have forgotten to mention. I would like to acknowledge the work of the late Judith Middleton-Stewart and her inspiring book *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour*. If I have to be marooned on a desert island, this is the book I will take. I am also very grateful to the staff of the various archive repositories I have had contact with. Special thanks go to Bridget Hanley, Collections Manager and the searchroom staff of the Ipswich, Lowestoft and Bury branches of Suffolk Archives. Thanks also to the staff at the UEA library, Norfolk Record Office, Cambridge University Library, Bedfordshire Archives and the Woburn Estate. I am also very grateful for the wonderful service provided by my local branch library, Broomhill.

Thank you to all my family and friends for being there and for offering emotional and practical support. Special thanks to my son Joseph Clarke for his IT expertise. To my late parents, Jim and Dorothy Baxter, they would have been very proud. I thank Stephen Clarke, tug skipper, for my continued interest in maritime Suffolk. My connection with Easton Bavents began with learning that my great-great-great grandfather Williams Lines and his family lived there in 1871, at 'the farm house near the cliff'. My love for that stretch of coastline was further fuelled by many cliff and beach walks with someone who was special to me at the time.

Lastly, huge thanks and love go to my husband Nick who has patiently proof read the majority of my draft thesis and has had to live with James Sponer, Downey Bekke and John Cornelyce, Easton Bavents finest inhabitants, for the last four years. For George, Isaac, William, Ella, Isla, Archie and Elsie – always have an enquiring mind.

## Abbreviations

A	Administration
AAB	Administration Act Book
Ant	Anticipation (1524 Lay Subsidy)
BA and Bed A	Bedfordshire Archives
BCE	Before the common era
BL	British Library
C/H	Covehithe
CE	Common era
CP	Capital Pledge
CP40	Common Plea Rolls (Indexes)
CUL	Cambridge University Library
E	English
EB	Easton Bavents
EIDB	England's Immigrants Database
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
L	Latin
LCA	London Customs Accounts
M/F	Manfare
MDR	Manorial Documents Register
N	Nuncupative will
NCC	Norwich Consistory Court
NRA	National Register of Archives
NRO	Norfolk Record Office
OW	Original copy will
PCC	Prerogative Court of Canterbury
PE	Peter Northeast
PW	Probate copy will
S/W	Southwold
SA	Suffolk Archives
SAC	Suffolk Archdeaconry Court
SFHS	Suffolk Family History Society
SSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SudAC	Sudbury Archdeaconry Court
TNA	The National Archives

W/W

Walberswick

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction: methodology, sources and thesis structure**

#### **Introduction**

In December 2019 the demolition of a house on a clifftop in north-east Suffolk, deemed unsafe due to coastal erosion, made the national newspapers.<sup>1</sup> Juliet Blaxland, the occupier, had brought both the house and its exposed location, at the 'easternmost edge of England', to a wider audience through her vivid published account of living in the house through all four seasons in one year.<sup>2</sup> The house was one of a handful of buildings which remained perched at the edge of a crumbling, windswept, sandy cliff at Easton Bavents, a parish reduced to a wafer thin strip of arable of land, lying just north of Southwold.<sup>3</sup> This stretch of the Suffolk coastline is a complex and dynamic environment, constantly experiencing coastal change. The two main physical processes driving this change are cliff erosion, which supplies sand and shingle to form barriers and spits and the subsequent breakdown and movement of these structures. The erosion and accretion are exacerbated by periodic storm surges which influence the volume and direction of the transportation of the shingle and sand elsewhere along the coastline.<sup>4</sup> This loss of large tracts of land and property, the build-up of sand and shingle banks, periodic inundations of salt water and associated population decline in effected communities are not recent phenomena.<sup>5</sup> Known as the

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<sup>1</sup> Alice Hutton, 'Juliet Blaxland: We've Lost 20ft of Land in a Fortnight. Our Home Will Be Gone by Christmas', *The Times*, sec. news, accessed 19 April 2021, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/juliet-blaxland-weve-lost-20ft-of-land-in-a-fortnight-our-home-will-be-gone-by-christmas-0kstnpkn9>.

<sup>2</sup> Juliet Blaxland, *The Easternmost House* (Dingwall: Sandstone Press Ltd., 2018).

<sup>3</sup> This house was one of three cottage built in the late 1800's as farmworker cottages for a neighbouring farm at Reydon. Between 1935 and 1952 up to 18 other houses, bungalows and holiday homes were built at Easton. Of these only 4 remain, plus two further holiday homes built in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, evidencing the continual presence of erosion. See, Lothingland Rural District Council, Plans register, 1934-1974, 43/L:2526, Suffolk Archives (SA).

<sup>4</sup> Bailey, Wain and Sear discuss more fully the impact of storm surges and the direction of wave energy caused by the strength of the North Atlantic Oscillation or NAO. Mark Bailey, Peter Wain, and David Sear, 'The Transformation of the Suffolk Coast c.1200 to c.1600: From Orford Ness to Goseford', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* 45, no. 1 (2021): 89.

<sup>5</sup> Dunwich, once an important port and trading centre in early medieval period has been extensively studied and its demise due to erosion, flooding and accretion, well documented. For examples see; Thomas Gardner, *An Historical Account of Dunwich; Antiently a City, Now a Borough...* (London: Privately, 1754); David Sear et al., '5883 Dunwich, Suffolk: Mapping and Assessing the Inundated Medieval Town', Final (Dunwich Project 5883, 2013); N. A. Comfort, *The Lost City of Dunwich* (Lavenham: Terence Dalton, 1994).

Sandlings, the coastline is made up of many similar small villages with only one roadway in and out and with several small rivers, some emptying into the North Sea, others winding to a dead end after estuaries have silted up. When you add in the presence of salt marshes, sandy cliffs, dramatic scenery and artists 'big' skies it becomes obvious why this area is designated as a National Landscape.<sup>6</sup>

To date, there has been no micro-focused, academic study, specifically centring on one of the Sandlings small maritime communities devastated by the dynamic coastal changes as described above.<sup>7</sup> This thesis addresses this omission with an in-depth study of Easton Bavents, focusing on the period c.1450-c.1680. By undertaking a partial reconstitution of the maritime community and by analysing the socio-economic impact of dramatic environmental change over this defined date range, a deeper understanding of this maritime community and its economy emerges. Easton has been eroded to the point of disappearance, but the rich array of sources examined within the thesis supports an integrated investigation of historical topography, demographic and economic changes, which in turn enables us to document its rise, fortune and ultimate decline and to align this with a reconstruction of the chronology of erosion, accretion and flooding. Such a micro-focused study will also highlight the diversity of the local culture, examine its social structures and examine the strength of family, kinship and community links. It is an approach advocated by Andy Wood who argues that it is 'in studies of small communities that we can often find larger worlds revealed to us'.<sup>8</sup> The methodology of a micro-historical study is founded on the axiom that the study of an individual community, which ultimately provides a qualitative analysis, may prove to be more fruitful than a wider focused serial study providing a quantitative based outcome.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> 'Suffolk and Essex Coast and Heaths, National Landscape', National Landscapes, accessed 10 June 2024, <https://national-landscapes.org.uk/>.

<sup>7</sup> Similar communities on the Lincolnshire coast have been studied by Pawley and Storm. Simon Pawley, 'Lincolnshire Coastal Villages and the Sea c.1300-c.1600: Economy and Society' (PhD, Leicester, University of Leicester, 1984); Alan Storm, 'Family and Maritime Community: Robin Hoods Bay c.1653-c.1867' (PhD, Leicester, University of Leicester, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> Andy Wood, 'Small Places, Big Questions: Reintegrating Social and Economic History, c.1350-1750', in *Custom and Commercialisation in English Rural Society* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2016), 251-52.

<sup>9</sup> For examples of micro-study based approaches see; Lynne Bowdon, 'Redefining Kinship: Exploring Boundaries of Relatedness in Late Medieval New Romney', *Journal of Family History* 29, no. 4 (2004): 407-20; Keith Wrightson, *Ralph Tailor's Summer: A Scrivener, His City, and the Plague* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); David Butcher, 'The Herring Fisheries In The Early Modern Period: Lowestoft As A Microcosm', in *England's Sea Fisheries, The Commercial Fisheries Of England And Wales Since 1300* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), 54-63; R. Ball et al., 'Who Controls the City?: A Micro-Historical Case Study of the Spread of Rioting across North London in August 2011', *City* 23, no. 4-5 (2019): 483-504.

Many of the Sandlings coastal parishes were involved in fishing and coastal maritime trade from early times and over the past forty years academic studies of the larger fishing and coastal trading ports, for later date periods, have been undertaken leading to an increased understanding of their economies and demographic composition.<sup>10</sup> Studies of the smaller villages which operated both fishing and a coastal trade, and therefore formed an important part of the wider coastal network, are lacking for the early modern period, however coastal fishing for the medieval period has been examined by both Mark Bailey and Judith Middleton-Stewart.<sup>11</sup> Maritime communities in fifteenth and sixteenth century England displayed peculiar demographic characteristics and built their own maritime identities due to the challenges posed by their environment and this thesis will examine and discuss these as part of the research process.<sup>12</sup> These characteristics included the high occupational rate of households involved in seafaring activities and the inherent dangers of the maritime environment with associated high male death rates. In 2001, Harold Fox, in his study on the evolution of early fishing villages on the South Devon coast, questioned whether such villages were separate from agricultural communities, or did they rely on agriculture for their economic survival.<sup>13</sup>

This core of academic studies provides the backdrop to this thesis, which will examine the extent of Easton Bavents dependence on maritime exploits as opposed to

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<sup>10</sup> Examples include; M. E. Allen, 'The Development of the Borough of Aldeburgh, 1547-1660: Aspects of the Economy of the Borough' (M.A., Wales, The University of Wales, Aberystwyth (United Kingdom), 1982); G. Alan Metters, 'Corn, Coal and Commerce: Merchants and Coastal Trading in Early Jacobean King's Lynn', *International Journal of Maritime History* XXII, no. 1 (2011): 149-78; David Butcher, *Lowestoft, 1550-1750: Development and Change in a Suffolk Coastal Town* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008); Nicholas R. Amor, *Late Medieval Ipswich: Trade and Industry* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011); A. R. Michell, 'The Port and Town of Great Yarmouth and Its Economic and Social Relationships With Its Neighbours On Both Sides of the Seas 1550-1714; an Essay in the History of the North Sea Economy.' (PhD, University of Cambridge, 1978).

<sup>11</sup> Bailey's work is based on the study of records of the Hethewarmoot manorial court which investigated the rights to wrecked goods. Mark Bailey, 'Coastal Fishing Off South East Suffolk In The Century After The Black Death', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* XXXVII, no. 2 (1990): 102-14; Middleton-Stewart's work was based on the study of wills left by mariners in the Dunwich deanery in Suffolk, 1370-1547. Judith Middleton-Stewart, "Down to the Sea in Ships": Decline and Fall on the Suffolk Coast', in *Counties and Communities: Essays on East Anglian History: Presented to Hassell Smith*, ed. Carole Rawcliffe, Roger Virgoe, and Richard Wilson (Norwich: Centre of East Anglian Studies, University of East Anglia, 1996), 69-83.

<sup>12</sup> Maryanne Kowaleski has published studies on such communities and notes that recent research is vast and multi-disciplinary and quotes work by Westerdahl. Maryanne Kowaleski, 'The Demography of Maritime Communities in Late Medieval England', in *Town and Countryside in the Age of the Black Death*, vol. 12, The Medieval Countryside (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 87-118; Christer Westerdahl, 'The Maritime Cultural Landscape', in *The Oxford Handbook of Maritime Archaeology*, ed. Ben Ford, Donny L. Hamilton, and Alexis Catsambis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Harold Fox, *The Evolution of the Fishing Village: Landscape and Society Along the South Devon Coast, 1086-1550*, vol. 1, Leicester Explorations In Local History (Oxford: Leopard's Head Press, 2001), 5.

agriculture; were its residents fishermen who farmed to survive or were they farmers who fished to survive.<sup>14</sup> Sheila Sweetinburgh, in her work examining the inheritance strategies employed by Kentish fishermen in the later Middle Ages, has reported that in order to ensure the survival of their fishing enterprises fishermen looked outside their affinal kin to the wider kinship links of their fishing community and even to those from other ports.<sup>15</sup> The strength of such kinship links within the maritime community of Easton, will be examined and the idea that consanguineal ties were stronger than affinal ties will be challenged. It may be argued that the 'kinship' of shared experience, such as being part of a fishing community or exposure to coastal erosion will be more in evidence. It is known that mariners from the area took part in fishing trips as far away as Iceland and that links were forged with communities across the North Sea basin. The extent of the movement of Easton Bavents inhabitants across the North Sea and their connectivity to other cultures and influences will be examined, along with an examination of the influx of alien immigrants into the area in the late 1400s.<sup>16</sup>

It has generally been assumed that coastal erosion and economic decline were the main factors for the decline of the community at Easton Bavents. However coastal change is complex and non-linear, and the interlinked processes of erosion, accretion and flooding presented episodic opportunities for economic growth in some periods and places, not simply a process of persistent decline: witness the growth of Lowestoft at the expense of Great Yarmouth, and Walberswick at the expense of Dunwich. Easton Bavents both grew and declined as a result of coastal change, but severe flooding of large tracts of land and social factors also played a part in its decline. Cartographic evidence of flooding and burial records of an out-break of plague in the area in 1602-1603 have been recorded but neither has been examined in any depth to assess their contribution to the decline of Easton.<sup>17</sup> To understand how the population of Easton Bavents lived and eventually dispersed, and to track the chronology of physical decline, the settlement's layout and environs must be studied

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<sup>14</sup> Fox and Pawley concluded differing views. Fox, 1:183–86; Pawley, 'Lincolnshire Coastal Villages', 154–97; See also Isaac Lord's concept of 'paramaritime' which considers that many people in maritime locations held multiple occupations. Isaac Lord, 'Port Towns and the "Paramaritime"', in *The Routledge Companion to Marine and Maritime Worlds, 1400-1800* (Routledge, 2020), 177–201.

<sup>15</sup> Sheila Sweetinburgh, 'Strategies of Inheritance Among Kentish Fishing Communities in the Later Middle Ages', *The History of the Family* 11, no. 2 (2006): 100.

<sup>16</sup> The extent of a 'North Sea' culture is discussed by; David Bates and Robert Liddiard, eds., *East Anglia and Its North Sea World in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013); Juliette Roding and Lex Herman Van Voss, eds., *The North Sea and Culture 1550-1800, Proceedings of the International Conference at Leiden, 21-22 April 1995* (Hilversum: Verloren Publishers, 1996); Brian Ayers, *The German Ocean: Medieval Europe Around The North Sea* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> In 1603, high numbers of burials are recorded and attributed to plague at Southwold, Beccles, Covehithe and Lowestoft. Butcher, *Lowestoft, 1550-1750*, 51–52.

at successive points in time. This is a challenging task. For example, the demise of the parish church of St Nicholas is reputed to have occurred in either 1638 or 1666 depending on the source consulted.<sup>18</sup> Determining the location of and a date of the demise of the church, along with other key structures and institutions will inform the reconstitution of the community and help understand what happened to it and when.

The future threat of dramatic climate change and the subsequent alteration of our physical world is focusing attention on the changing landscapes around us and is challenging us to understand how our actions will affect their outcome. Responses to coastal erosion, accretion and flooding fall into two camps, either a managed retreat, allowing the natural forces to take their course, or hard, expensive interventions designed to protect financial assets, although these often cause the effects to become more problematic further along the coastline. This thesis is not attempting to understand or apply any contemporary scientific, geographical approaches to coastal erosion, nor suggest any physical solutions to the problem.<sup>19</sup> An understanding of the historical timeline of such dynamic changes to a coastline and the effect on landscapes, communities and economies can act as a focus through which such a problem can be examined and solutions informed.<sup>20</sup> It is anticipated that this thesis will ultimately aid such discussions around proposed outcomes for the Sandlings coastline. Additionally, there are examples of cultural heritage industries being constructed around localities which have a long experience of coastal erosion, such as that witnessed at nearby Dunwich.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Blaxland, *The Easternmost House*, 1; John Blatchly and Peter Northeast, 'A Survey of Lost and Ruined Churches of Suffolk', in *Suffolk Churches and Their Treasures*, ed. H. Munro Cautley (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1982), 436.

<sup>19</sup> See Jeremy Pile, 'Analysis of Coastal Change : Erosion and Accretion Along the Suffolk Coast' (PhD, London, Birbeck University of London, 2003).

<sup>20</sup> 'Risky Cities, Living with Water in an Uncertain Future Climate', Risky Cities, accessed 24 June 2024, <https://riskycities.hull.ac.uk/>; Ellie Graham, Joanna Hambly, and Tom Dawson, 'Learning from Loss: Eroding Coastal Heritage in Scotland', *Humanities* 6, no. 4 (2017): 16, <https://doi.org/10.3390/h6040087>; See also reports entitled 'Suffolk's Changing Coast' and 'Tides of Change' at, 'Touching the Tide', Suffolk and Essex Coast and Heaths National Landscape, accessed 10 June 2024, <https://coastandheaths-nl.org.uk/managing/projects/touching-the-tide/>; 'Fractured Coasts: A Coastal History Roundtable', *Firths and Fjords: Comparative Historical Perspectives on Adjacent Coasts* (blog), 25 May 2020, <https://firthsandfjords.com/2020/05/25/fractured-coasts-a-coastal-history-roundtable/>.

<sup>21</sup> Benjamin Morris, 'In Defence of Oblivion: The Case of Dunwich, Suffolk', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 20, no. 2 (2014): 196–216.

## Outline of methodology and main sources

As the last remaining farm house and outbuildings of the early modern community at Easton Bavents fell into disrepair and were demolished as the cliff edge eroded in the 1870s, there are no physical structures or geographical land mass remains of the community under investigation. Yet communities lost through coastal erosion have captured the imagination of antiquarians and historians for at least 250 years.<sup>22</sup> Thomas Gardner, in 1754, was the first to publish any specific historical information when he included eighty lines of text discussing Easton Bavents in his much longer work on the more famous lost 'mediaeval city' of Dunwich.<sup>23</sup> We learnt of Easton, that 'it is reputed Antient, and to have had a considerable trade for the Fishery' and 'this town, situated on a high cliff, formerly was large, and well peopled, but now is reduced to two dwelling-houses and about 10 souls'. Gardner quoted extracts from ten will bequests from inhabitants of the parish, providing details on aspects of the church of St Nicholas, which he tells us has been 'long swallowed up by the sea', and noted that a chapel and guild had been located there too. Subsequent historians and researchers of the local history of the area, when referring to Easton Bavents, have continued to quote Gardner without any obvious questioning, confirmation or supplementation of his writings; a situation which needs to be addressed.<sup>24</sup>

To undertake such a micro-study of Easton over the late medieval and early modern eras requires extensive research of a wide breadth of primary archival and secondary written sources, the majority of which have not been previously examined. Here, the approach to the identification of potential archival source material has been atypical for a PhD researcher, due to the author's years of experience working as an archivist in a local authority repository which has resulted in the discovery of a wide range of original and secondary material, some of it uncatalogued.<sup>25</sup> This has uncovered a

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<sup>22</sup> Examples include; Gardner, *An Historical Account of Dunwich*; William Whitaker, *The Geology of Southwold: And of the Suffolk Coast From Dunwich to Covehithe* (London: HMSO, 1887); J. A. Steers, 'The Suffolk Shore, Yarmouth to Aldeburgh', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* XIX, no. 1 (1925): 1–14; Charles Green, 'East Anglian Coast-Line Levels Since Roman Times', *Antiquity* 35, no. 137 (1961): 21–28.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Gardner, *An Historical Account of Dunwich*, 257–260.

<sup>24</sup> See Alfred Inigo Suckling, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Suffolk: With Genealogical and Architectural Notices of Its Several Towns and Villages*, vol. 2 (London: J. Weale, 1848), 308–13; William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Suffolk* (Sheffield: William White, 1885), 241; H. R. Barker, *East Suffolk Illustrated* (Bury St Edmunds: F. G. Pawsey & Co., 1909), 43; Blatchly and Northeast, 'A Survey of Lost and Ruined Churches of Suffolk'.

<sup>25</sup> See bibliography and footnotes for the extent of referenced primary archival and secondary source material.

body of extant material that is probably unparalleled for an English rural community lost to coastal erosion and is a major strength of the thesis.

The following research themes are used as the basis for the five chapters within the body of the thesis.

- Defining the historical topography and coastal morphology allied with the extent and rate of the coastal changes
- Demographic changes and economic wealth
- Tenurial evidence and land holdings
- Relevant aspects of the maritime economy
- A reconstitution of elements of the community and its inhabitants

The date range of c.1450-c.1680 is justified on two grounds. It represents the period of greatest survival of extant documentation, and it also coincides with the start of the demographic and economic rise of the community and its decisive demise. The correlation between the main archival sources consulted and the above themes will now be discussed.

Although the land mass and parish of Easton Bavents has all but disappeared due to coastal erosion this thesis will attempt a reconstruction of both the physical topography and the population over time.<sup>26</sup> The loss of land means we cannot apply established landscape archaeology principles such as fieldwalking or the analysis of historical ecology. Likewise, no specific maps or plans of the parish prior to the early 1800s survive to provide a visual sense of any topography including the location of a rumoured haven and mere. Therefore, to understand the extent and rate of the coastal changes and to define the topography and coastal morphology, historic maps, maritime navigation charts and early written navigational directions are examined. The proposed approach is similar to that advocated by Birmingham and French, who adopted a scientific methodology, including the potential use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS).<sup>27</sup> GIS is a research tool and a means of presenting data and findings, used when studying maps and the analysis of historic landscapes.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> This will not take the full form of 'Family Reconstitution' as advocated by the Local Population Studies Society based at Cambridge University due to the non-survival of parish registers.

<sup>27</sup> H. Birmingham and J. R. French, 'Travelling Forelands: Complexities in Drift and Migration Patterns', *Journal of Coastal Research* 70 (2014): 102–8, <https://doi.org/10.2112/SI70-018.1>; 'Aggregate Dredging and the Suffolk Coastline, a Regional Perspective of Marine Sand and Gravel off the Suffolk Coast Since the Ice Age' (The Crown Estate & British Marine Aggregate Producers Association, 2015).

<sup>28</sup> In person study of UEA GIS module HIS-7001B was not possible due to Covid 19 (May 2021) and does not feature to the extent it was envisaged in the initial methodology.

Their study, of Benacre Ness (north of Easton Bavents), included analysis of historic maps. A similar, although larger study focusing on the Dunwich coastline, can be found in the final report for the Dunwich Project 5883.<sup>29</sup> The visual analysis of such sources will be expanded within this thesis to develop a better understanding of how the authors of these works re-used previous findings. It is acknowledged that many early maps and charts re-used previous copies and printing plates without any attempt at new surveys.

To identify demographic changes and assess the economic wealth of Easton Bavents a range of taxation lists, alien subsidies and other returns which provide headcounts, including Domesday and an ecclesiastical return of 1603, are examined. The aim, of identifying the chronology of any changes in population figures and taxable wealth over five centuries, provides a framework for understanding the size and the fortunes of the community. Similarly, the level and distribution of taxable wealth provides insights into the community's economic framework and, by tracking changes to the framework over time and over layering information from other sources, the balance between maritime and agricultural pursuits also becomes evident.<sup>30</sup> None of these tax returns was originally compiled to provide a record of the population count, yet for historians of pre-modern England they represent the best raw headcounts of people within a community at a given time. As noted before, there are no extant parish registers or other associated parish material which has survived for Easton which might otherwise have been used to aid this process.

To put Easton's demographic and economic wealth experience into context its profile is compared with six communities located on the north-east section of the Suffolk coastline. The six comparator parishes are (listing from north to south) Kessingland, Benacre, Covehithe (also known as Northales), South Cove, Reydon and Southwold. All six share parish boundaries with and lie to the north, south and west of Easton Bavents. Kessingland and Benacre were chosen as they lie on the north and south of the Hundred river which has experienced periods of silting up, flooding and erosion and thus provide an opportunity to compare Easton's experience with two parishes in a similar geographical and environmental situation. Covehithe lies immediately to the

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<sup>29</sup> Sear et al., '5883 Dunwich, Suffolk: Mapping and Assessing the Inundated Medieval Town', 24–28.

<sup>30</sup> Approaches to reconstitution can be found in E. A. Wrigley and Roger Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction*, 1st pbk. ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1989); Nigel Goose and Andrew Hinde, 'Estimating Local Population Sizes at Fixed Points in Time: Part I - General Principles', *Local Population Studies* 77 (2006): 66–74; Nigel Goose and Andrew Hinde, 'Estimating Local Population Sizes at Fixed Points in Time: Part II - Specific Sources', *Local Population Studies* 78 (2007): 74–88.

north of Easton and its southern border comprises the small stream, once known as the Easton river, which now empties into Easton broad. As will become evident, this stretch of water was once much larger and formed a shared estuarine haven between the two. Reydon and South Cove are inland and therefore they provide comparators for population and wealth for communities based on agricultural as opposed to maritime economies. The final community, Southwold, expanded from a handful of tenants at the time of the Domesday survey to achieve borough status by the late fifteenth century and to become by 1524, the most populous settlement in the area. It provides an opportunity to gauge Easton's experience alongside the one community which proved an enduring commercial success.<sup>31</sup>

The transcription, translation and interpretation of the wills of the inhabitants of Easton Bavents provides a main component of the research material. These personal records contain the wishes of testators for the disposal of their bodies and goods and the welfare of their souls and their loved ones. The wills also contain illuminating insights: into occupations and working lives; ownership of land, property and goods; and affinal, consanguineal and other 'kinship' links with regards to inheritance wishes. From the earliest surviving will of 1376, to the last to fall within the date under investigation of 1675, a total of 191 wills and administrations are identified and investigated. Both Peter Northeast and Judith Middleton-Stewart have extensively worked with the wills of all the Dunwich deanery testators and selected will transcripts for Easton Bavents and other parishes are examined.<sup>32</sup> A certain level of caution is exercised with the information from the wills as intention is not the same as implementation and there is seldom proof that the last wishes were carried out.<sup>33</sup> A full calendar of the extant wills for Easton is provided as Appendix 1.

The wills were proven at all levels of the ecclesiastical courts appropriate to the testator's land and property holdings. For Easton, the appropriate courts were the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC), the Norwich Consistory Court (NCC) and the Archdeaconry of Suffolk Court (SAC). Three wills were proven for varying reasons at

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<sup>31</sup> Alan F. Bottomley, *A Short History of the Borough of Southwold* (Southwold: Southwold Corporation, 1974).

<sup>32</sup> The Peter Northeast Collection, including his will transcripts, is held at Suffolk Archives (SA), see HD2448/1/1-528. The Easton Bavents file contains a precis of 22, mainly Latin wills. Middleton-Stewart's work is based on her UEA thesis and includes extracts from 15 Easton Bavents testators' wills. Despite extensive questioning her archive of transcribed Dunwich deanery wills has not be located. Easton Bavents will file, 20th century, HD2448/1/1/159, SA. Judith Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour, Death and Remembrance in the Deanery of Dunwich, Suffolk, 1370-1547*, vol. 17, *Studies in the History of Medieval Religion* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001).

<sup>33</sup> Middleton-Stewart, 17:2.

courts outside this main jurisdiction. Wills of testators owning goods worth more than £5 or more in two or more dioceses were proven at the PCC and on average Dunwich deanery parishes registered 3 per cent of all their wills at this court. Although only four Easton Bavents testators have their wills proven there, this equates to 6 per cent of the total, double the average figure, already providing an early indicator of potential wealth within the community.<sup>34</sup>

The NCC was where those who owned goods worth £5 or more in one or more archdeaconries registered their wills and for Easton 41 wills are proven there and 47 administrations. The lowest level of probate was the SAC where all the testator's goods had to be held within the Archdeaconry. For Easton 89 wills and 7 administrations are proven there. Although described as the lowest court, it was not just for the poorest as many of these testators left bequests which rivalled or outstripped those at the NCC.

The survival of wills and administrations is very haphazard which Heath believes was the result of alternately energetic or feckless registrars, deans or receivers.<sup>35</sup> The numbers therefore cannot be used for assessing population figures or pinpointing mortality events. No administrations for the SAC have survived prior to 1600 and yet for the NCC there were high numbers recorded between 1376-1600. The wills allow the wishes of female testators to be included within the study, which is vital as the inclusion of a female perspective is missing from many other archival sources. Married women had to seek permission from husbands to leave a will and all the thirty-five Easton Bavents female testators, 19 per cent of the total, were widows.

As Middleton-Stewart comments, wills leave a personal impression and they spread before us a variety of vital living networks.<sup>36</sup> From them appear families, groups of friends, trade associations, parish communities, fraternities, patronage networks and a whole host of clerics. The will testaments are therefore extensively employed to provide evidence relating to the themes of tenurial evidence and land holdings, aspects of the maritime economy and the reconstitution of elements of the community and its inhabitants

The manorial court records for Easton Bavents survive for the period 1275-1689, with those covering 1275-1485 being more complete than post 1500 when there are large

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<sup>34</sup> Middleton-Stewart, 17:47.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Heath, 'Urban Piety In The Later Middle Ages: The Evidence Of Hull Wills', in *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1984), 211.

<sup>36</sup> Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:60.

gaps in the runs. See Appendix 2 for a complete listing. Short runs of post 1500 court rolls were sampled to identify leading jurors, capital pledges and any information about occupational backgrounds and nationality status of the main ‘players’ of the manor, and any changes over the period from 1485 to 1643 as economic fortunes changed. Examination of the court records also facilitates ownership of the manor to be traced, and the effects discussed, as it is tracked from local family and resident lord to ownership by a distant landowner looking potentially for profits from engrossment and improvement. The earlier manorial accounts, dated 1330-1466, have been examined by both Mark Bailey and Colin Richmond and although outside the later date range of this study, relevant mainly topographical information from them is included where appropriate.<sup>37</sup> An initial aim of the methodology was to transcribe and translate from Latin a survey of the manor for 1531, which it was hoped would provide the foundation for the reconstitution of the topography and population of Easton Bavents.<sup>38</sup> However, it emerged that the survey was incomplete and largely replicates details from an earlier period, so proved less informative than anticipated: it does provide descriptions of previously unrecorded topographical details and tenurial ownership.

Easton’s maritime exploits are explored through research into port and customs records. The geographical coverage of the results, and therefore discussion around the maritime exploits of the mariners from Easton, is dictated by the arbitrary nature of such transcriptions. Records from the ports of Southampton, Newcastle and London are utilised within the thesis from associated published works and an online database.<sup>39</sup> It is recognised that further extensive research into the un-transcribed surviving records relating to Great Yarmouth and to ports in what is now known as

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<sup>37</sup> Mark Bailey kindly placed his notes made from the 14th century Easton Bavents manorial accounts at my disposal. Mark Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk: An Economic and Social History, 1200-1500*, vol. 1, History of Suffolk (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007); Colin Richmond, *John Hopton: A Fifteenth Century Gentleman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>38</sup> Survey of the Manor of Easton Bavents, c.1431-1531, NRA17140 Russell, Box 793, uncatalogued material, Bedfordshire Archives (BA), Bedford.

<sup>39</sup> Henry S. Cobb, ed., *The Local Port Book of Southampton for 1439-40*, vol. V, Southampton Records Series (Southampton: Southampton University Press, 1961); Thomas B James, ed., *The Port Book of Southampton 1509-10*, vol. 1, 2 vols, Southampton Records Series, XXXII (Southampton: Southampton University press, 1989); Paul Studer, ed., *The Port Books of Southampton 1427-1430*, Southampton Record Society 15 (Southampton: Southampton Record Society, 1913); C.M. Fraser, ed., *The Accounts of the Chamberlains of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1508-1511*, Record Series (Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne) 3 (Newcastle: Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1987); ‘The London Customs Accounts, Ed. Stuart Jenks, Quellen Und Darstellungen Zur Hansischen Geschichte, Neue Folge, Bd. 74 ( Lubeck: Hansischer Geschichtsverein [Hanseatic History Association], 2016-Present).’, Medieval England Maritime Project, accessed 26 February 2024, <https://memp.ace.fordham.edu/editions-of-particular-accounts/>.

The Netherlands and Belgium would provide valuable additional knowledge, but due to limited timescales, is outside the scope of the research plan. Earlier research into the general economics and experiences of the Suffolk ports draws on works by N. J. Williams and Dorothy Burwash alongside mercantile involvement, wreck rights and voyages to Iceland discussed by John Webb and Tom Johnson.<sup>40</sup> Data relating to Easton vessels contributing to the merchant fleet, are extracted from Tudor and Elizabethan State Papers (when regular surveys of England's merchant fleet were undertaken) and from an online database compiled from research undertaken by Craig Lambert and Gary Baker.<sup>41</sup> Further insights into Easton's maritime economics, mercantile involvement and its general execution are supplemented by information supplied in the will testimonies of the mariners and court records generated by personal litigation and Admiralty Courts.<sup>42</sup>

The reconstitution of the ecclesiastical elements of the community including the parish church of St Nicholas, the Guild of St Mary and a chapel dedicated to St Margaret is primarily undertaken through data extracted from selected records of the Archdeaconry of Suffolk, including clergy institution registers and visitation books detailing the condition of church buildings and their congregations. As with Easton's maritime economy these data are supplemented with information from the will testimonies.

Another factor of the research methodology was an identification of a digital program for capturing and recording the research data generated for the reconstitution element of the thesis which would allow ease of sorting by date, name and subject matter. Various databases were examined, and discussions undertaken with other academic researchers for background information and suggestions but due to the complexities of data input into commercial generic Family or Place History databases, Excel spreadsheets have been used to record all research findings.

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<sup>40</sup> Neville Williams, *The Maritime Trade of the East Anglian Ports, 1550-1590*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Dorothy Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping 1460-1540* (Devon: David & Charles, 1969); John Webb, *Great Tooley of Ipswich: Portrait of an Early Tudor Merchant* (Suffolk Records Society, 1962); Tom Johnson, 'The Economics of Shipwreck In Late Medieval Suffolk', in *Custom And Commercialisation In English Rural Society*, vol. 14, Studies in Regional and Local History (University of Hertfordshire Press, 2016), 121-38.

<sup>41</sup> 'The Merchant Fleet Of Late Medieval and Tudor England 1400-1580', Medieval and Tudor Ships of England, accessed 29 June 2024, <http://www.medievalandtudorships.org/>.

<sup>42</sup> Thanks to Nick Amor for supplying a copy of his extracted Common Plea Index entries for Suffolk, 1350-1500 (Hilary term every 5<sup>th</sup> year only).

## **Structure and location maps**

The organisation of chapters within this thesis is aligned with the five main research themes identified earlier. These five themes are bookended by chapters which discuss the prehistory to c.1400 of Easton and a chapter which deals specifically with the five themes but relates them to the decline of the parish in the seventeenth century.

Chapter 2, entitled 'Setting the scene to c.1400' discusses the importance of the geological formation of the Suffolk coastline and assesses the evidence for early settlements in the area including nationally significant Bronze Age and early Scandinavian archaeological finds. Initial evidence of significant historical topographic features of the coastline and the estuarine area around Easton Bavents are recorded and changes within these are tracked to c.1400 through recourse to Domesday, the *Nonarum Inquisitiones* and selected entries from the manorial rolls and accounts.

Chapter 3, entitled 'Topography evidenced in maps, charts and written navigational aids to c.1613' attempts to reconstruct the historical topography and to understand the extent and rate of coastal changes. Although extensive research was undertaken to identify unpublished or unrecorded maps and charts, featuring the north-east Suffolk coast, this approach did not yield positive results. Early written navigational aids provide significant evidence of coastal features, including the presence of a large sandbank off Easton, whose ultimate disappearance is linked with the onset of the rapid coastal changes in the vicinity. A defence chart of 1539 is discussed in detail as the first detailed visual representation of the coastline, and further mapping to 1613 provides more evidence of topographical features and coastal changes including evidence of accretion and extensive flooding. Underpinning each discussion is a rationale as to the map or charts creation and an attempt to understand if new survey data was utilised.

Chapter 4, entitled 'Demographic changes, taxation wealth and immigration figures, 1086-c.1603', charts population figures using Domesday, lay subsidies and an ecclesiastical survey and compares Easton's experience to that of the six comparator parishes, discussed previously. It moves on to chart the changes in wealth within the seven vills through the lay subsidies. Finally, the chapter uses alien subsidies to record the density of immigrants in north-east Suffolk from 1440 to 1542. The unusually high density and economic wealth of the immigrants at Easton is examined in detail because the rising fortunes of the community in the latter part of the fifteenth century is part a cause and part a symptom of their presence.

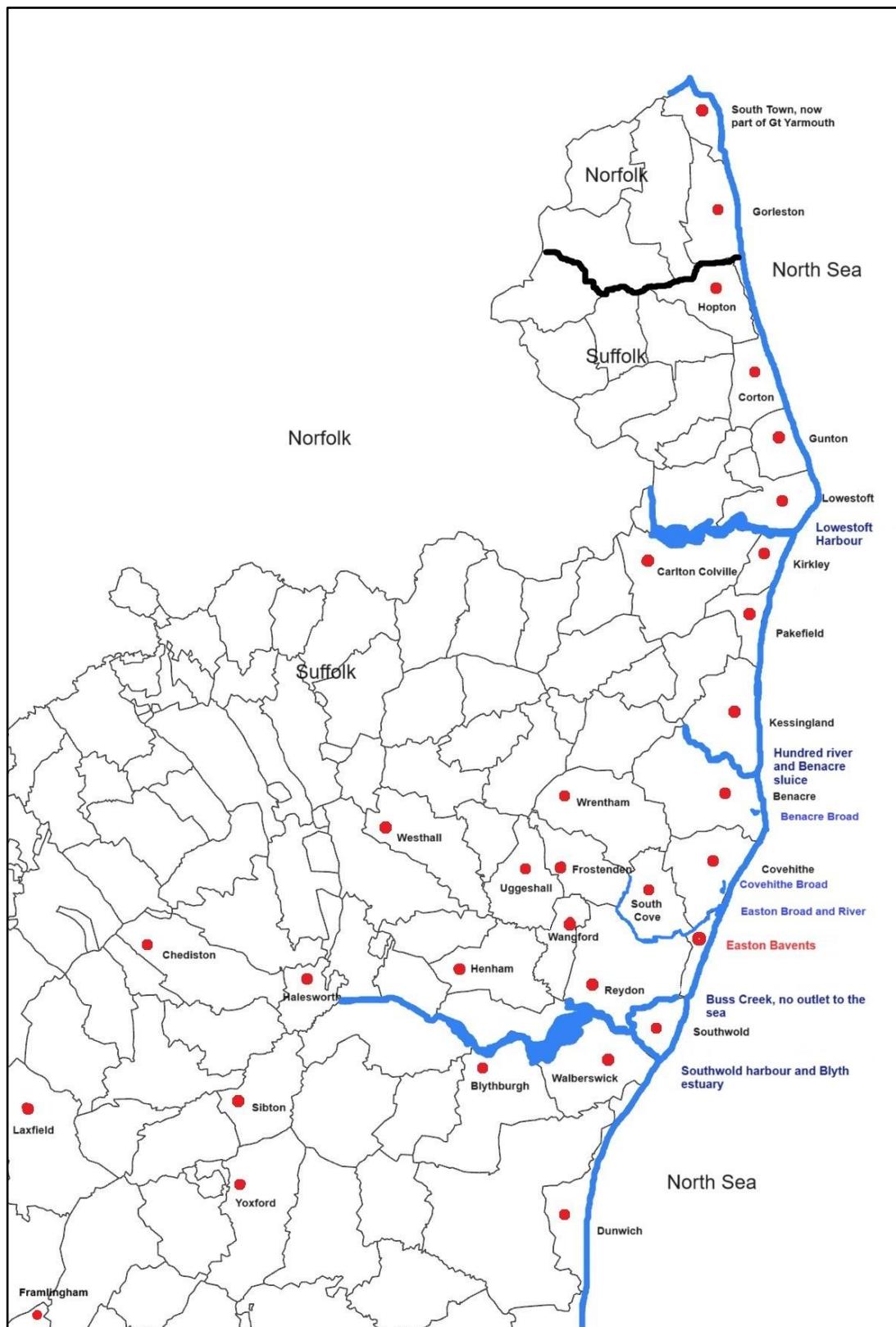
Chapter 5, entitled 'Manorial administration and tenurial evidence to c.1650', charts the ownership of the manor of Easton Bavents with Empoles, from resident local family to distant non-resident lord and discusses how this impacts on land holdings and tenure. The findings of the 1531 survey are examined, along with its deficiencies, with a full listing of land holdings from both the survey and from the will testaments given in Appendix 3. Snapshots of occupational and nationality data of the main players within the manorial courts are discussed in 1485 and 1532 reinforcing the reliance of the community on maritime wealth and the input of the alien immigrants.

Chapter 6, entitled 'Maritime economy c.1400-c.1550', highlights and underpins the importance of Easton's maritime economy and its associated mercantile connections not only locally, but within the wider North Sea basin including Iceland, and with London and Calais. This chapter also provides evidence of the special characteristics and identities of the maritime community and the wider kinships links operating within it.

Chapter 7, entitled 'Ecclesiastical institutions, clergy and laity, c.1300-c.1600' provides a partial reconstitution of elements of the community and its inhabitants through an in-depth look at its religious buildings, guild and beliefs. Within this chapter a further understanding of the wider kinship links operating within maritime Easton is discussed and as the maritime economy collapses how these links change.

Chapter 8, entitled 'Seventeenth century decline' takes the research themes from Chapters 3-7 and relates them to the catastrophic decline which envelopes Easton to c.1680.

**Figure 1 – North-east Suffolk parishes mentioned in the text**



Notes – The parishes of South Town, Gorleston, Burgh Castle, Bradwell and Belton administrally were moved to Norfolk from Suffolk by 1975. Lowestoft harbour was formed by a cut through from Lake Lothing to the sea in 1831.

Figure 2 – Location of places in England, Europe and Iceland mentioned in the text



Note – Zeeland is now known as Southern Netherlands and Brabant is a province in north western Belgium. See Figure 20 for a detailed plan of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Low Countries.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Setting the Scene: Easton Bavents to c.1400**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will examine evidence relating to geological formations at Easton Bavents, prehistoric and early human settlement within the locality, Domesday topography, and a brief snapshot of both the topography and the community during the fourteenth century. It is essential to understand both the physical and human background factors which have shaped and moulded a landscape. Williamson rightly states that 'soils and climate, relief and topography...will together combine and interact to mould the history of a region', then he counterbalances this with 'the landscape itself is not a passive backdrop...the patterns and structures imposed upon the land by successive societies have their own trajectories, unfolding over many centuries'.<sup>43</sup> Landscape is the culmination of thousands of years of human activity. The problem at Easton Bavents is the near complete loss of its geographical base and any physical evidence of the medieval and early modern landscape due to subsequent coastal erosion. Despite such a severe challenge secondary literature has been examined for evidence that would enable the reconstruction of the underlying solid and surface geology and the overlying soils. Evidence for pre-1400 human settlement and topographical features such as estuaries, rivers and valleys has also been extracted from extant geological, archaeological and primary historical sources. The coastal area under focus in this chapter stretches from Pakefield to Southwold with the main focus on present day Easton Bavents and Covehithe.

#### **Geological formation and pre-historic settlement to the Iron Age, c. 43 CE**

The surviving, receding sandy cliffs at Easton Bavents contain important stratigraphic information and have been described as 'the most important geological area in East Suffolk'.<sup>44</sup> There were once two distinct areas of cliff called North and South Cliff in earlier documents, and as they have eroded the sequence of glaciations,

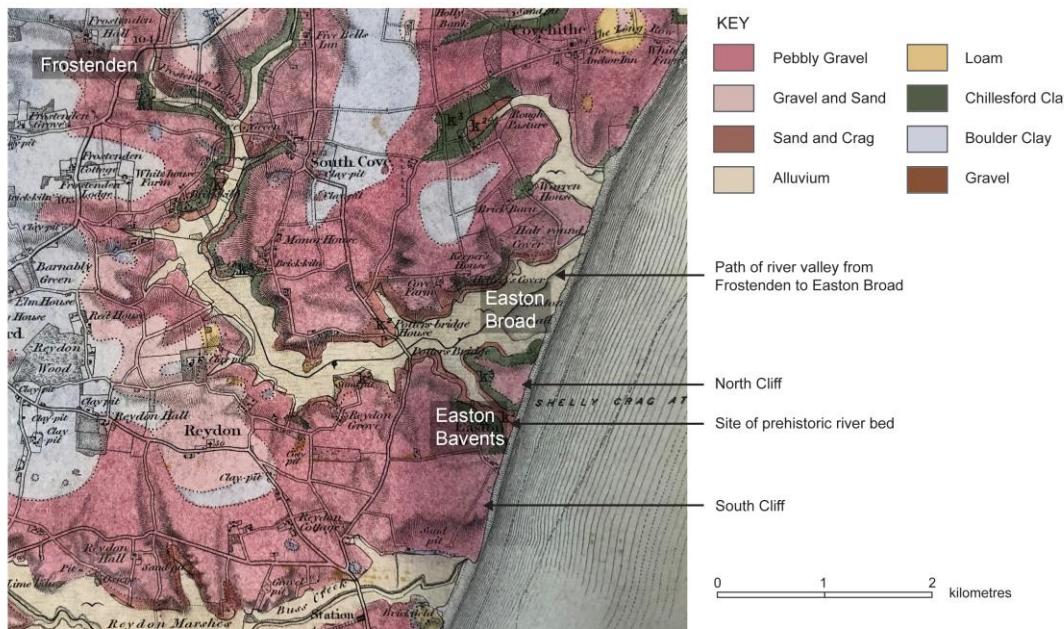
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<sup>43</sup> Tom Williamson, *East Anglia*, vol. 2, England's Landscape (London: Collins, 2006), 10.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Gardner, *Early History and Geology of Easton Bavents* (Southwold: Southwold Museum, 1998), 4.

interglaciations, ebbs and rises in sea levels can be ‘read’ from the strata and deposited fossils which were exposed in the cliff face.<sup>45</sup> See Figure 3 for the position of the remnants of North and South Cliffs in 1884 (marked with arrows), prior to their near complete erosion as of 2023.

**Figure 3 – Map showing the underlying geology at Easton Bavents, highlighting the position of the North and South Cliffs, the position of prehistoric riverbed and the path of the river valley from Frostenden to Easton Broad, 1884.**



Source - Ordnance Survey Map of Geological Survey of England and Wales, 50NE, (Section), 1884.

The underlying solid geology of estuarine and marine crags which is found at Easton and in most of eastern Suffolk formed at the end of Pliocene period approximately 2.5 million years ago. Half a million years ago Britain was not an island but was a north-western peninsula of the European continent. A predecessor of the Thames flowed through south Suffolk along with a river system named Bytham which flowed eastwards towards north Suffolk from the Midlands.<sup>46</sup> Archaeological evidence of early hominids dating from some 700,000 years ago at Pakefield have been recorded along

<sup>45</sup> The geology in this area is difficult to decipher. See John Wymer’s ‘Shaping of Suffolk’ including the formation of both its solid and surface geology. David Dymond and Edward Martin, eds., *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk* (Ipswich: Suffolk County Council Planning Department, 1988), 8–13.

<sup>46</sup> The landscape and geological development of Suffolk and the associated early river systems is discussed in greater detail by James Rose, Richard Hamblin, and Peter Allen, ‘Preglacial Rivers (Thames, Bytham), Palaeosols, and Early Humans in Suffolk’, in *GeoSuffolk 10th Anniversary Volume* (Ipswich: GeoSuffolk, 2012), 269–301; Richard J. O. Hamblin and James Rose, ‘The Red, Norwich and Wroxham Crags of Northern Suffolk’, in *A Celebration of Suffolk Geology, GeoSuffolk 10th Anniversary Volume* (Ipswich: GeoSuffolk, 2012), 175–97.

the path of the Bytham river and is evidence of early prehistoric habitation in the area.<sup>47</sup>

The Anglian Glaciation occurred between 478,000 to 424,000 years ago when ice covered the majority of Suffolk and caused the diversion of the Thames to its general present path and the Bytham to be completely over-ridden. When this ice melted it left thick deposits of boulder clay and produced melt waters which drained south and east producing valleys which are now occupied by the rivers of Suffolk we know today. These include the Waveney and the Blyth, and another west-east valley carrying the Easton river, now a small stream but which used to be navigable at least as far as Frostenden. In c.1878 the area was surveyed and the cliff at Easton was recorded and drawn.<sup>48</sup> Another prehistoric riverbed of clay and peat was recorded, visible in the lower lying area situated between the North and South Cliffs, (Figure 3). Many Mesolithic (c.8,300-c.4,500 BCE) finds were recovered from this exposed riverbed during erosion events and at very scouring, low tides when the overlying sand and pebbles were stripped from the beach. These finds included a flint adze, heads of harpoons, needles and awls of bone and wood.<sup>49</sup> This area has now been lost to coastal erosion but is further evidence of early prehistoric human habitation.

Around c.15,000-10,000 BCE there was still dry land between Suffolk and the Low Countries and Denmark, with the North Sea starting somewhere north of what is now known as the Dogger Bank. This is a large area of submerged sand bank lying approximately 62 miles off the east coast of Yorkshire, England.<sup>50</sup> At some time between c.10,000 and c.6,000 BCE, due to the rise in sea levels caused by interglacial melting, the land bridge between Britain and Europe disappeared and Britain became an island. It is impossible to determine how far east the coastline of Suffolk reached

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<sup>47</sup> There is further discussion regarding the formation of tidal-inlets and gravel deposition and disagreement around these fossil findings, see. H.B. Mottram, 'Tidal-Inlets And Gravel Deposition During The Late Norwich Crag (Lower Pleistocene) of North-Eastern Suffolk, U.K.', *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association* 128 (2017): 547–57; Rose, Hamblin, and Allen, 'Preglacial Rivers (Thames, Bytham), Palaeosols, and Early Humans in Suffolk', 289; Clare Good and Jude Plouviez, 'The Archaeology of the Suffolk Coast' (Ipswich: Suffolk County Council, Archaeological Service, 2007), 8; H.D. Collings, 'Man Worked Bones From The Norwich Crag of Easton Bawents', *Suffolk Natural History* 16, no. 5 (1973): 309–15.

<sup>48</sup> See plates of the cliff sections, Line 3, Easton 1878-1880. Whitaker, *The Geology of Southwold: And of the Suffolk Coast From Dunwich to Covehithe*.

<sup>49</sup> Gardner, *Early History and Geology of Easton Bawents*, 2.

<sup>50</sup> C. Wickham-Jones, 'Submerged Landscapes Around The World: Doggerland, Britain and Ireland', in *Landscape Beneath The Waves: The Archaeological Exploration Of Underwater Landscapes*, vol. 4 (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2018), 151–66; Antony Firth, 'Submerged Prehistory in the North Sea', in *The Oxford Handbook of Maritime Archaeology*, ed. Ben Ford, Donny L. Hamilton, and Alexis Catsambis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 768–808,  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199336005.013.0034>.

at this time, likewise, trying to determine the contours of the coastline is impossible too, although it would have been punctuated by many river valleys and estuarine features.

Most of the solid geology of Suffolk consisting of chalk and crags is covered by till, a deposit resulting from the glaciations of around two million years ago during the Quaternary or Pleistocene Period. This till takes the form of a brownish clay mixed with lumps of chalk.<sup>51</sup> The coastline around Easton is different however, with glacial outwash gravels and river deposits laying over the crag. Great expanses of sand line the coast from Gorleston in the north to Felixstowe in the south and have given the area its descriptive term of the ‘Sandlings’ or ‘Sandlands’. The soils of the Sandlands to the north of the coastline from Aldeburgh to Kessingland are acidic and infertile and in the many blocked minor river valleys peat has formed.<sup>52</sup>

In the late 1960s the pasture field of what remained of the North Cliff at Easton was extensively ploughed for the first time and further traces of prehistoric settlement were uncovered. Around four hundred implements were found and recorded, mainly of the Neolithic period (c.4,500 – c.2,500 BCE) including many flint arrow heads, blades, awls and pottery attributed to the Beaker people.<sup>53</sup> Settlement evidence for this period is a rarity, especially in this coastal region of Suffolk.<sup>54</sup> Of more national importance was the discovery in the ancient river bed at Easton of an ox rib engraved with an image of a deer, dating from the early Bronze Age of c.2000 BCE.<sup>55</sup> This was highlighted in 2018 in a BBC programme by Ray Mears on the treasures of the Bronze Age and was cited as one of the earliest examples of human art to survive in the United Kingdom.<sup>56</sup> Evidence of Iron Age (c.700 BCE – 43 CE) settlement in the

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<sup>51</sup> Dymond and Martin, *Historical Atlas Suffolk*, 12.

<sup>52</sup> Tom Williamson, *Sandlands: The Suffolk Coast and Heaths* (Macclesfield: Windgather Press Ltd., 2005), 8.

<sup>53</sup> Gardner, *Early History and Geology of Easton Bawents*, 2; Finds recorded on Suffolk Heritage Explorer as EBV 005, ‘Suffolk Heritage Explorer’, accessed 16 July 2024, <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/>.

<sup>54</sup> It is noted that there are practical problems with recording finds in the area under discussion due to the distance from Suffolk’s professional archaeologists based in Ipswich and in Bury St Edmunds. Good and Plouviez, ‘The Archaeology of the Suffolk Coast’, 8, 35.

<sup>55</sup> See ‘In the beginning section’. ‘Southwold Museum, Suffolk’, Southwold Museum, accessed 16 July 2024, <https://www.southwoldmuseum.org/>.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Civilisations Stories, Series 1, Treasures of the Bronze Age with Ray Mears’, BBC, accessed 16 July 2024, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b1c8v6>.

area is scant and at Covehithe a potentially significant site has been largely or completely lost to erosion.<sup>57</sup>

### **Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian settlement, 43-1065 CE**

There is a greater survival of evidence of Roman (43–410 CE) occupation and settlement in the area with coins being found at Reydon and at Southwold.<sup>58</sup> Settlement sites from this period are scattered and show a clear preference for valley and river access.<sup>59</sup> A potential minor Roman road has been identified running east from Covehithe church, with associated parallel ditches and enclosure.<sup>60</sup> Finds at Reydon, close to the border with Easton, on the south side of the valley might relate to a Roman building or a salt extraction site.<sup>61</sup> In the 1880s and 1890s, as the cliffs eroded, three shafts filled with pottery were exposed at Covehithe and at Easton, and these were identified as Roman boundary shafts.<sup>62</sup>

Maritime evidence of settlement in the Covehithe-Easton area for the Anglo-Saxon period (410-1065 CE) is demonstrated in the survival of a 16ft dugout boat which was found off-shore and thought to have come from the eroded Easton river floor. It has been radiocarbon dated to 775-892 CE.<sup>63</sup> In addition, in 1980, a side rudder, carbon dated to 870-900 CE (HAR-4476) was dredged up from the seabed off Easton Bavents. In 1986 another was discovered on the beach adjacent to Easton Broad and has not been carbon-dated, but its similarity to the first rudder suggests a contemporary dating.<sup>64</sup> The Rudders came from different vessels and their good state of preservation points to them being covered by silt until some event caused them to be brought to the surface. In archaeological terms the discovery of two side Rudders from northern European ships dating from the tenth to twelfth centuries is of 'especial

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<sup>57</sup> Many late Iron Age coins were found on the beach in the 1970s. Good and Plouviez, 'The Archaeology of the Suffolk Coast', 37.

<sup>58</sup> Carenza Lewis and Catherine Ranson, 'Archaeological Test Pit Excavations in Southwold and Reydon, Suffolk, 2014' (Access Cambridge Archaeology, 2014), 25.

<sup>59</sup> Good and Plouviez, 'The Archaeology of the Suffolk Coast', 38.

<sup>60</sup> Finds recorded on Suffolk Heritage Explorer as COV 084 and COV 130. Carenza Lewis and Catherine Ranson, 'Fieldwalking at Covehithe, Suffolk, January 2015' (Access Cambridge Archaeology, 2015), 22.

<sup>61</sup> Finds recorded on Suffolk Heritage Explorer as REY 008 Good and Plouviez, 'The Archaeology of the Suffolk Coast', 38.

<sup>62</sup> J. Eustace Grubbe, 'Vestiges Of Roman Colonization Discovered In The Neighbourhood Of Southwold', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* VII, no. 3 (1891): 303–10.

<sup>63</sup> Find recorded on Suffolk Heritage Explorer as COV Misc Lewis and Ranson, 'Fieldwalking at Covehithe, Suffolk, January 2015', 23.

<sup>64</sup> Gillian Hutchinson, 'The Southwold Side Rudders', *Antiquity* 60 (1986): 220.

interest' as very few such rudders have been found.<sup>65</sup> The Northern European archaeological record has less than 20 such finds, with none previously recorded in Britain. Hutchinson discusses the implications of these two finds in close proximity to each other and concludes they either sank in the former submerged Easton river or they were interred in funerary rights on the former low promontory of Easton Ness.<sup>66</sup> The vessels steered by these rudders would have been of the type used by Vikings from across the north sea for the transportation of cargo or for invasion and settlement. Potential evidence of such incursions has survived erosion and been identified inland at South Cove.<sup>67</sup>

## Toponymy

An examination of the derivations of the place-names within the hundreds of Lothingland, Mutford and in the north-eastern area of Blything is suggestive of distinct settlement patterns. Easton derives from the Old English term 'East-Tun' meaning the east homestead.<sup>68</sup> The surrounding settlement place names from Pakefield to Dunwich are all Old English as are those in the north of Lothingland Hundred from Hopton to Gorleston. Around Lowestoft and following the initial line of the river Waveney there is a cluster of more recent Old Danish settlement names. Although Scandinavian in origin, these names do contain enough Anglo-Saxon elements as well, to suggest that there was no 'draconian, genocidal clearance by these Northerners of the earlier (Anglo-Saxon) inhabitants along the path of the river or estuarian area.<sup>69</sup>

The Old English names indicate the arrival and settlement of Anglo Saxons from the continent using linguistic elements from their Germanic homelands, around the fifth century for areas where earlier British settlements had dwindled or decayed.<sup>70</sup> These

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<sup>65</sup> Hutchinson, 219.

<sup>66</sup> The rudders are on loan to Southwold Museum from the National Maritime Museum. Hutchinson, 221; 'And in the Beginning - Southwold's Early History', Southwold Museum, accessed 10 August 2024, <https://www.southwoldmuseum.org/inthebeginning.htm>.

<sup>67</sup> At South Cove, on the course of the old Easton River, a site has been recorded of a potential Viking fortification. Ben Raffield, 'Antiquarians, Archaeologists, and Viking Fortifications', *Journal of the North Atlantic* 20 (2013): 15–16.

<sup>68</sup> Keith Briggs and Kelly Kilpatrick, *A Dictionary of Suffolk Place-Names*, vol. 6, English Place-Name Society Popular Series (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 2016), 46. The suffix of Bavents (derived from Bavents in Calvados, France) was not added until 1330

<sup>69</sup> Norman Scarfe, *Suffolk in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1986), 5.

<sup>70</sup> Briggs and Kilpatrick, *A Dictionary of Suffolk Place-Names*, 6:xi; Ruut Korpinen, 'Examine the Value of Place-Names as Evidence for the History, Landscape and, Especially, Language(s) of Your Chosen Area', *Innervate Leading Student Work in English Studies* 9 (2016): 112.

names provide valuable information on topographical detail, including hydronyms, subsistence information and directional detail of the topography at that time. Easton was clearly the eastern settlement (in relation to other directional settlements) and possibly the most eastern settlement in the area. Southwold derives from a 'South Wood', leading to Reydon, 'a hill where rye is grown'. West of Reydon is Wangford, where there was a 'crossing ford by open ground' with Henham, a 'high homestead' overlooking it. To the north was Benacre, where there was 'a cultivated plot where beans were grown' and Wrentham, 'a homestead of a man called Wrenta'.<sup>71</sup> Kessingland, north of Benacre, was possibly 'newly cultivated land at the cress-bed' or 'newly cultivated land of Cyssi's people', either way the term 'land' is taken to denote a new settlement of the Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>72</sup>

The topography of the land adjacent to the river and estuary which discharged into the sea between Easton and Northales is harder to decipher from the Anglo-Saxon names. The differing naming conventions of the parish which is today recognised as Covehithe but at previous times has also been known as Northales has led to difficulties in allowing a consistent name to be used, for further explanation see Appendix 5. In 1066 the Domesday Book recorded Frostenden, lying three miles to the north-east of Easton, and described it as having a '*portus maris*', a sea-harbour.<sup>73</sup> The Old English meaning of Frostenden is 'valley frequented by frogs' and the path of this old river valley, which now discharges into Easton Broad, is graphically revealed in the 1884 map of the underlying geology of the area (Figure 3).

This early port at Frostenden would have been accessible from the sea via the river and estuary lying between Northales and Easton. Between Frostenden and Easton, on the path of the river valley, lies South Cove or Cove as it was known at Domesday. The Old English meaning of Cove or Cofa is varied and could mean 'a chamber, hollow, den, cave or a cove'.<sup>74</sup> Northales lies adjacent to Easton, across the mouth of the early estuary, to the north. The meaning of 'halh' has attracted considerable discussion amongst students of toponymy with Gelling and others discussing it at

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<sup>71</sup> Briggs and Kilpatrick, *A Dictionary of Suffolk Place-Names*; Korpinen, 'Value of Place-Names as Evidence', 119–21.

<sup>72</sup> Briggs and Kilpatrick, *A Dictionary of Suffolk Place-Names*, 6:82; Margaret Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape, The Geographical Roots of Britain's Place-Names* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1993), 245.

<sup>73</sup> A Williams and G Martin, eds., *Little Domesday Book: Suffolk. Introduction Translation and Indexes* (London: Alecto Historical Editions, 2000) f.414v.

<sup>74</sup> Briggs and Kilpatrick, *A Dictionary of Suffolk Place-Names*, 6:37.

length in their works.<sup>75</sup> Variants include a nook, a hollow, valley, a detached portion of a settlement and a bend in a river. Briggs and Kilpatrick interpret it as 'most likely a tongue of land between two water meadows or two water-bodies'.<sup>76</sup> In an article specifically discussing the term 'halh', Stiles provides strong support for its meaning of 'slightly raised ground in marsh'.<sup>77</sup> Given the directional North prefix, it is probable that the name Northales signified a settlement lying at the northern end of the land between Benacre and Easton, on raised ground which sloped down to the marshy area adjacent to the river valley and its coastal estuary.

Court records of c.1320 link manorial holdings at Easton, Westhall and Uggeshall.<sup>78</sup> The directional toponomy positions Easton in relation to Northales, with Southwold being the southern directional boundary. To the west of Easton lies Westhall with Uggeshall sitting between the settlements. This positions Uggeshall as the potential centre for the directional naming.<sup>79</sup>

### Domesday topography, 1066-1086

The Domesday survey for Suffolk, along with Norfolk and Essex is listed in Little Domesday, an accompanying volume to the main Domesday volume. The entries within Little Domesday provide the researcher with greater detail and complexity than those of Domesday, although due to the sheer quantity and looseness of this detail it can be difficult to interpret.<sup>80</sup> The main land holdings of the vill of Easton (*Estuna*) are divided between those held by King William and those held by Gilbert the Crossbowman, a tenant in chief of the King. The smaller holding is that of the King, described as one carucate of land with two villeins. The holdings of Gilbert the Crossbowman, are listed as 240 acres of land with five villeins in 1066, reduced to

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<sup>75</sup> Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names* (Stamford: Shaun Tyas, 2000), 123-33; Eilert Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary Of English Place-Names*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 212; Scarfe, *Suffolk in the Middle Ages*, 27-29.

<sup>76</sup> Briggs and Kilpatrick, *A Dictionary of Suffolk Place-Names*, 6:103.

<sup>77</sup> Patrick Stiles, 'Old English Halh, "Slightly Raised Ground Isolated By Marsh"', in *Names, Places and People: An Onomastic Miscellany In Memory Of John McNeal Dodgson* (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1997), 330-44.

<sup>78</sup> Rental of land held by John de Empoles/Enepole in Easton Bavents, Westhall, Stoven and Brampton (Uggeshall lies adjacent to Stoven and Brampton), c.1320s, HA30/50/22/20.9 (17), SA.

<sup>79</sup> The early importance of Uggeshall warrants further research which is outside the scope of this thesis. Uggeshall is Old English for 'Ugge's nook. Briggs and Kilpatrick, *A Dictionary of Suffolk Place-Names*, 6:144.

<sup>80</sup> Since 1986 the Little Domesday volume has been subdivided into three for preservation purposes by TNA. Little Domesday: Suffolk, 1086-1087, E 31/1/3, TNA. The main transcript text of Domesday used here is the Aletco Edition of 2000. Williams and Martin, *Little Domesday Book*.

three in 1086, plus five bordars and one slave. Between 1066 and 1086 several further differences are noted within his holding, with land holdings, livestock and infrastructure being reduced as well as the population count. In 1066 it supported one and a half demesne plough teams but in 1086 there was none. At both dates three plough teams belonging to the men are noted along with woodland for eight pigs and three acres of meadow. In 1066 it had a saltpan, one horse, three cattle, two pigs and eighty sheep but by 1086 these are all recorded as 'now none'. The value of Gilbert the Crossbowman's holding in 1066 was given as 40s and in 1086 as 20s. Two free men named Godric and Eskill are also recorded with one plough and twenty acres of land worth 4s.

Although terse, the Domesday details of the topography of Easton amount to around 380 acres of arable land; small areas of meadow grassland used for hay, probably located in the marshland areas adjacent to the river or estuary; and manorial woodland of oaks or beech trees used for the pannage of pigs.<sup>81</sup> No church was recorded, although this does not mean none existed, because a church, with no associated taxable land endowments may not have been included in Domesday.<sup>82</sup> The apparent loss of livestock and the demise of the demesne plough team and the coastal or estuarine saltpan by 1086 is impossible to explain, and was possibly due to coastal erosion, but the result was a halving of the value of Gilbert's holdings. Details of measurements of 'lengths' and 'widths' are also given in Little Domesday for most of the Suffolk vills. Easton Bavents is described as one league long and half a league broad with geld payable to the king of 6d. Expressed in leagues and furlongs this does not equate to the overall size of the vill, but it is plausibly interpreted to be an estimate of the extent of its arable land.<sup>83</sup> The connection between the linear measurements and the formula for the geld payment are thought to be connected but the exact understanding of them is not fully understood.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Woodland is recorded along with the number of pigs which it could support for pannage or fattening and from this the size would have been evident to the Domesday compilers. Warner also states that only private manorial pannages from which profits accrued are recorded in Domesday. Peter Warner, *Greens, Commons and Clayland Colonization: The Origins and Development of Green-Side Settlement in East Suffolk* (Leicester, 1987), 20–21.

<sup>82</sup> David Butcher, *The Half-Hundred Of Mutford, Domesday Analysis and Medieval Exploration* (Lowestoft: Heritage Workshop Centre, 2013), 18; H. Munro Cautley, *Suffolk Churches and Their Treasures*, 5th ed. (Boydell Press, 1982), 3.

<sup>83</sup> The league here is equal to 1.5 Roman miles of 1,000 paces. Easton's arable holdings were 1.5 miles in length x 0.75 miles wide. Williams and Martin, *Little Domesday Book*, 383.

<sup>84</sup> Mary Hesse, 'Domesday Land Measures in Suffolk', *Landscape History* 22, no. 1 (2000): 21–36.

To the north of Easton, across the river and estuary was the settlement of Northales (*Northals/Northalla*). Here there were nine freemen with one bordar holding land listed under the King and four separate tenants in chief. The largest holding was for Edric, a freeman holding two carucates of land in 1066, as one manor, listed in 1086 under the holdings of William de Warrenne. There are no listings of woodland or pannage, meadow or other features which provide any further topographical details. The high number of freemen at Northales holding land from the King and four others contrasts with only two freemen recorded in the neighbouring vill of Easton (and none at Southwold). The high proportion of freemen in Suffolk within settlements, holding land from divided tenants in chief or lordships, points to a predominance of scattered forms of settlement as opposed to nuclear settlement.<sup>85</sup> Southwold (*Sudwold*) to the south of Easton on the coast was a holding of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds at Domesday, providing supplies for the monks at Bury. One carucate of land was worked by five villeins and four bordars with one demesne plough and four belonging to the men plus livestock including thirty sheep. It included half a sea-weir and a quarter share of another one for the abbey presumably located in the estuarine mud flats of the Blyth river or possibly at Buss Creek, lying between Southwold and Easton. These wooden structures would have been used for catching fish on both the ebb and flow tides daily.<sup>86</sup>

Southwold was also required to provide 25,000 herrings annually to the abbey in 1086, an increase from 20,000 in 1066. This herring render was one of four large renders documented in Domesday for north-east Suffolk, with others from Dunwich, Blythburgh and Beccles, along with many smaller renders from the hundreds of Wangford and Lothingland, which signifies the importance of coastal fishing at this early date.<sup>87</sup> In 1066 Domesday records the presence of four salt pans within the estuarine reaches of Southwold and Easton, at Frostenden (*Froxedena*), Uggeshall (*Uggecehala*), Bridge (*Bringas*, adjacent to Dunwich) and at Easton itself. Salt would have been a vital component in preserving the large quantities of herrings before their

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<sup>85</sup> Bailey quoting Dymond, Scarfe and Warner. Norman Scarfe and W. G. Hoskins, *The Suffolk Landscape*, Revised ed. (Bury St Edmunds: Alastair Press, 1987), 21. Scarfe and Hoskins, 141–43; Warner, *Greens, Commons and Clayland Colonization*, 27–28.

<sup>86</sup> For recent research into fish weirs from Anglo-Saxon dates to early medieval see, Aidan O’Sullivan, ‘Place, Memory and Identity among Estuarine Fishing Communities: Interpreting the Archaeology of Early Medieval Fish Weirs’, *World Archaeology* 35, no. 3 (2003): 449–68.

<sup>87</sup> In 1086, the King received 60,000 herring from Dunwich and 3,000 from Blythburgh. The abbey at Bury received 60,000 from Beccles along with the 25,000 from Southwold. Hugh De Montford received 10,900 from 17 properties in the Wangford and Lothingland hundreds. James Campbell, ‘Domesday Herrings’, in *East Anglia’s History: Studies in Honour of Norman Scarfe*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill, Carole Rawcliffe, and Richard G. Wilson (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2002), 7–8.

consumption.<sup>88</sup> By 1086 both salt pans at Frostenden and Easton are recorded as 'now none' which perhaps signifies that the seaport at Frostenden and the associated lower reaches of the river and estuary at Easton had suffered flooding or silting up or elements of both. The other salt pans and two water mills at Bridge and Uggeshall are still recorded in 1086.<sup>89</sup> These would have been situated within the Blyth river estuary to the south, indicating that the Blyth had escaped whatever fate had befallen the Easton river. The history of the East Anglian coast shows that even places in close proximity could experience very different processes of coastal change over short periods of time: an erosion event in one place could trigger an accretion event nearby.

The final part of the Southwold Domesday entry is difficult to interpret, although it appears to list the geld assessment. It reads 'Southwold is 9 furlongs long and 5 broad [13.5 x 7.5 Roman miles]. This division [extends] from the sea to Yarmouth and [it pays] 2 1/2 d in geld'.<sup>90</sup> This mention of a division (*divisio*) or an administration unit appears to indicate that Southwold and Yarmouth are inter-connected although from Southwold to Yarmouth is at least 22 current miles. Pestell, whilst discussing the foundation of monastic cells at Yarmouth by Herbert de Losinga, the bishop of Norwich, concludes that at Domesday the fishing port of Yarmouth extended its sphere of influence as far as Southwold, some twenty miles distant. During the next century he argues that Losinga could potentially have headed off a rival port expanding at Southwold by ensuring increased development at Yarmouth. Tensions and economic rivalry certainly existed between the East Anglian bishops and the abbey at Bury St Edmunds.<sup>91</sup> The salted herring renders from Southwold and the production of salt at Easton point to the existence in 1066 of extensive tidal salt marshes and economic connections between the two communities.

However, the make-up of the population and the division of the land holdings were distinctly different within the three vills of Easton, Northales and Southwold. Southwold was a single unit land holding of the abbey at Bury, populated by monks and their workers. Northales, recording a high number of freemen and multi land holders' points to a scattered settlement which would evolve into three manorial land

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<sup>88</sup> Campbell, 9.

<sup>89</sup> Williams and Martin, *Little Domesday Book* f.331v, 299v.

<sup>90</sup> Williams and Martin, F.371v.

<sup>91</sup> The Priory of St Nicholas at Yarmouth was founded on wealth based on fishing. Tim Pestell, *Landscapes of Monastic Foundation: The Establishment of Religious Houses in East Anglia c.650-1200* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), 185–86.

holdings. Easton appeared to be more a nucleated settlement at this date and as time passed only one main manorial land holder emerged within the vill.<sup>92</sup>

### **Easton c.1100-1330**

The first recorded evidence of a church at Easton is dated between 1135 and 1141, when Roger Bigod and his son William made gifts to Thetford Priory which included the churches of Reydon, Rissemere, Easton and Sotherton.<sup>93</sup> The de Bavents family had close relationships with the Bigods for at least three generations from 1166, especially with Hubert de Bawent who witnessed four Bigod charters and appeared in two of their household lists.<sup>94</sup> The de Bawent family were early lords of the manor of Easton and their name was added as a suffix presumably to distinguish it from the vill of Easton near Framlingham. Their main household was at Chediston, fifteen miles west of Easton, with further manorial holdings including Combs and Rendlesham in Suffolk and Hayford in Norfolk.<sup>95</sup> In the late twelfth century one Hubert de Bawent granted an acre of land in Easton to the priory of Blythburgh.<sup>96</sup> The land is described as 'laying south of the roadway which stretches out west from the church in this vill'. This is further explicit evidence of a church at Easton. The grant of a further two acres of land to the priory, by Michael de Bawent, son of Hubert, dated to the early thirteenth century provides further glimpses of topography. The land is described as 'lies next to land of Ranulifi de Clif towards the east'.<sup>97</sup> The locational surname of Clif indicates that Ranulfi's holdings lie on a cliff on the eastern side of the vill, possibly on the coastal cliff edge.

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<sup>92</sup> Manorial holdings will be discussed in fuller detail in Chapter 5.

<sup>93</sup> Christopher Harper-Bill and British Academy, *English Episcopal Acta. VI, Norwich, 1070-1214*, English Episcopal Acta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 43–44.

<sup>94</sup> Mark Morris, *The Bigod Earls of Norfolk In The Thirteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), 64, 143.

<sup>95</sup> The Bawent family originally came from Bawent in Calvados, Normandy. Philippa Brown, ed., *Sibton Abbey Cartularies*, vol. 1, *Suffolk Charters*, VII (Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 1985), 30; Walter Arthur Copinger, *The Manors of Suffolk, Notes on Their History and Devolution, The Hundreds of Blything and Bosmere and Claydon*, vol. 2 (Manchester: Taylor, Garnett, Evans & Co Ltd, 1908), 34; Walter Arthur Copinger, *The Manors of Suffolk, Notes on Their History and Devolution, The Hundreds of Samford, Stow and Thedwestry*, vol. 6 (Manchester: Taylor, Garnett, Evans & Co Ltd, 1910), 155–56; Walter Arthur Copinger, *The Manors of Suffolk, Notes on Their History and Devolution, The Hundreds of Hoxne, Lackford and Loes*, vol. 4 (Manchester: Taylor, Garnett, Evans & Co Ltd, 1909), 322–23; Francis Blomefield, *An Essay Towards A Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, vol. 10 (London: W. Miller, 1809), 425.

<sup>96</sup> Christopher Harper-Bill, ed., *The Cartulary of Blythburgh Priory Part Two*, *Suffolk Charters*, III (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer Limited, 1981), 148.

<sup>97</sup> Harper-Bill, 148.

The coastal landscape is further described in a now lost 1236-1237 cartulary document from Butley Priory, thought to have been drawn up in response to questions of manorial wreck rights and requirements for the upkeep of bridges.<sup>98</sup> The document sets out the geographical limits of the manorial lordships from Pakefield, Suffolk to Hindford, Essex, regarding their rights to claim wreck of the sea (**Table 1**, Appendix 4).

Kessingland, Benacre, and Dunwich are all described as having a 'port', indicating direct access for vessels from the sea, whereas the absence of such at Northales and Easton indicates strongly that at this date these places did not have the same safe access for vessels. An explanation for this is the entrance to the Easton river had become blocked at some point post 1086, preventing sea access to the Domesday port of Frostenden via South Cove. The cartulary notes that Southmere, a body of water (mere is an Old English term for 'pool'), marks the boundary point between Northales and Easton.<sup>99</sup> If we accept that the Easton river was not readily navigable from the sea, due to a partial or complete shingle/sand barrier blocking the entrance, then limited or no wave action in the river would have increased silt deposition. This would have encouraged the formation of marshy ground behind the shingle/sand barrier which is consistent with the reference to the Southmere. The directional term south distinguished it from a body of water to the north possibly at Benacre and potentially that now known as Benacre Broad. It is also possible that Southmere is a corruption or transcription error and is purely a southern boundary reference as Gelling notes it is 'difficult to distinguish from 'gemaere' boundary and 'mere'.<sup>100</sup> The boundary between Easton and Southwold is defined as at Eston-Stone, a description of a physical stone marker in the landscape and not, as has been dubiously claimed by Wren, a lost settlement situated on the eroded 'ness' at Easton.<sup>101</sup>

In 1256 the Close Rolls recorded an order to the sheriff of Suffolk, to make a perambulation to mark a boundary or a demarcation between the land of the Abbott

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<sup>98</sup> Gardner references the text as 'Chartulary of Butley, Tanner Collection'. The Tanner Collection is held at the Bodleian, Oxford. Gardner, *An Historical Account of Dunwich*, 115-18; Suckling, *History and Antiquities of Suffolk*, 2:305-6.

<sup>99</sup> Briggs and Kilpatrick, *A Dictionary of Suffolk Place-Names*, 6:169.

<sup>100</sup> Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape*, 26.

<sup>101</sup> In 1880 a square stone marker was exposed by a very low tide on the foreshore at the boundary point between Southwold and Easton, near to Buss Creek. It was photographed, measured and noted as possibly the base of an old font as remnants of a square pedestal remained. It contained several carved letters and dates, the earliest of which was 1736. Gooding Collection, Volume D, pp86-87, Southwold Museum; Bottomley Collection, n.d., 841/7/8/4, SA. Wilfred Wren, *Ports of the Eastern Counties* (Lavenham: Terence Dalton Limited, 1976), 184.

of Bury St Edmunds and that of Hubert de Bavent.<sup>102</sup> This signals a dispute over the boundary limits between the vills of Southwold and Easton, perhaps because the physical landscape had altered in some manner due to further erosion or accretion. In 1309 Edward II issued a writ against Thomas de Bavent for taking wreck coming ashore on the coast between Benacre and Snodespyke.<sup>103</sup> The description of 'Snodespyke' was an original scribal error as Thomas de Bavent responded by pleading even he 'does not know what Snodespyke is.' He indicated it was on his soil of Easton and as it was given as a boundary it was obviously of topographical importance in the case.<sup>104</sup> *Snodespyk* is suggested by Briggs to be derived from the masculine personal name *Snod* and the Middle English word *pik* in the sense of 'pointed hill'.<sup>105</sup>

In 1302, Thomas de Bavent of Chediston with lands in Easton was recorded as paying half a knight's fee of Framlingham Castle.<sup>106</sup> A relative, Henry de Bavent, possibly his brother, was described as rector of the church of Easton in 1302 and 1306. He was party to a bond in 1306 relating to 'tithes from the parishioners of Wangford and Easton who fish in the sea', proof that the community were now directly involved in sea fishing, potentially launching vessels from the shore at this date.<sup>107</sup> The same Thomas de Bavent (or his son) held the manor of Easton from c.1321, and in 1330 was granted a charter to hold a market and fair at Easton Bavent. This is the first written evidence of the manor being described as Easton Bavent.<sup>108</sup>

The charter of 1330 granted a weekly market to be held on a Wednesday and the annual three-day fair to be held on 'the vigil, the day and the morrow of St Nicholas, the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of December. Six years later in 1336 Thomas received a further grant to amend the charter for the fair to be held annually in June around the feast of St Barnabus which fell on the 11<sup>th</sup>. A fair in June would surely have been a more

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<sup>102</sup> A. E. Stamp, ed., *Calendar of Close Rolls, Henry III, 1254-1256*, vol. 9 (London: HMSO, 1931), 402; Bottomley, *A Short History*, 1; David Butcher, *Norfolk and Suffolk Churches: The Domesday Record* (Poppyland Publishing, 2019), 95–96.

<sup>103</sup> Memoranda Rolls of the Lord Treasurer's Remembrancers, 1309, E 368/79 Rot. 35d, TNA. Thanks to Keith Briggs for providing the detail of this document reference.

<sup>104</sup> Stuart Archibald Moore, *A History of the Foreshore and the Law Relating Thereto*. (London: Stevens & Haynes, 1888), 34, 139, <http://archive.org/details/ahistoryforesho00hallgoog>.

<sup>105</sup> Keith Briggs, *The Place-Names of Suffolk* (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, n.d.), forthcoming, under 'Easton Bavents minor names'.

<sup>106</sup> John T Munday, *A Feudal Aid Roll For Suffolk 1302-3: A Transcript from I'veagh Suff. 161* (J. T. Munday, 1973), 10.

<sup>107</sup> Bonds for payments, 1302, 1306, HB26/412/723, 724, SA.

<sup>108</sup> Copinger, *Manors of Suffolk, Blything*, 2:63; Maxwell-Lyte H. C., ed., *Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1-14 Edward III, 1327-1341* (London: HMSO, 1912), 353; Charter for a grant of a fair and market at Easton Bavents, Uncatalogued Gooch Papers, 1330, T631/6, SA.

economically attractive proposition to users than one held in early December. Earlier market charters with associated fairs had been granted locally to Southwold (1221) and Kessingland (1251) during the period when the majority of Suffolk market grants were made. The grant of much later markets, in close proximity to each other at Easton (1330) and Northales (1298) is especially unusual and striking.<sup>109</sup> Fox, looking at markets granted to fishing communities on the south coast in the fourteenth century, suggests that manorial lords, such as Thomas de Bawent, sought these trading franchises to increase their revenue by regulating the selling and trading of fish from the foreshore and beach area.<sup>110</sup> The unusual and striking significance of the cluster of later charters is heightened by the knowledge that this was a period of major storm activity and coastal realignment along the Suffolk coast, and the period when much of medieval Dunwich was washed away and its harbour irretrievably blocked.<sup>111</sup> It suggests that the coast between Lowestoft and Southwold had also undergone major change.

### **'Nonarum Inquisitiones', 1342**

The final decades of the thirteenth century and the period up to the 1340s witnessed mounting economic vulnerability in an era of increasing climatic instability, which, in the North Sea region, manifested itself in a series of storm surges.<sup>112</sup> Major storms of the 1280s, 1290s and 1328 must have affected the coastline at Easton, to the north of Dunwich, but with little extant manorial or legal documentation prior to c.1330 it is impossible to reconstruct the extent of any such changes. The earliest extant source is the 'Nonarum Inquisitiones' of 1342. This provides ecclesiastical taxation and tithe information for every Suffolk parish, including evidence of the loss of arable land to

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<sup>109</sup> 'Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516', Centre For Metropolitan History, accessed 24 February 2021, <https://archives.history.ac.uk/gazetteer/gazweb2.html>.

<sup>110</sup> Fox, *Evolution of the Fishing Village*, 1:91.

<sup>111</sup> Mark Bailey, ed., *The Bailiffs' Minute Book of Dunwich, 1404-1430*, vol. XXXIV, Suffolk Records Society (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1992), 64; Mark Bailey, 'Per Impetum Maris: Natural Disaster and Economic Decline in Eastern England, 1275-1350', in *Before the Black Death: Studies in the 'Crisis' of the Early Fourteenth Century*, ed. Bruce M.S. Campbell (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 184-208.

<sup>112</sup> Bruce M.S. Campbell, *The Great Transition. Climate, Disease and Society in the Late-Medieval World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1, 11, 208, 283; Bailey, 'Per Impetum Maris', 188.

explain discrepancies between the values provided for the ‘Nonarum’ grant and those values listed in an earlier taxation of Pope Nicholas IV held in 1291.<sup>113</sup>

The evidence provided by the jurors of the coastal parishes of north-east Suffolk (listed here from north to south) revealed extensive arable land losses in some parishes, for example 400 acres at Gorleston and a further 100 acres at the adjacent parish of Corton. Yet no losses were recorded at Gunton, Lowestoft or Kirkley. Pakefield recorded a loss of 100 acres and Kessingland 200 acres. At Benacre, Northales, Easton, Southwold and Walberswick no losses were recorded but Dunwich recorded a loss of many houses.<sup>114</sup>

The clustering of the losses, and the nature of the assessment indicate that the ‘Nonarum’ authenticate genuine phenomena between 1291 and 1341. The coast around Easton was not adversely affected by storm activity in this period, whereas the older trading centres of Yarmouth and Gorleston, Kessingland and Dunwich were. The applications for market charters in the vicinity of Easton in exactly this period cannot be coincidental. It appears that the deterioration of the ports at Kessingland and Dunwich, with the associated difficulties of vessels now accessing them, made the smaller maritime havens, such as that between Northales and Easton, more attractive to seafarers. It is plausible that by 1330 the recent succession of violent storms and associated coastal changes, including the shifting of sand banks, had re-configured the coast in a way that improved the accessibility of the haven between Northales and Easton to sea faring vessels, perhaps by washing away an earlier shingle bar.

### **Manorial accounts and court rolls, 1320-1396**

The extant court rolls for the manor of Easton commence in 1275 with separate accounts surviving from 1330 and both provide further glimpses of topographical and economic details.<sup>115</sup> Manorial courts from the 1320s and mid 1330s were sampled and their contents reflected a predominantly rural community with some non-agricultural activities.<sup>116</sup> Within the accounts there is little evidence of any loss of income or

<sup>113</sup> Alan R. H. Baker, ‘Evidence in the “Nonarum Inquisitions” of Contracting Arable Lands in England during the Early Fourteenth Century’, *The Economic History Review* 19, no. 3 (1966): 518.

<sup>114</sup> George Vanderzee, *Inquisitions Nonarum Tempore Edwardi III (Inquests of the Subsidy of Ninths at the Time of Edward III)* (Burlington, Canada: TannerRitchie Publishing, 2013), 81–84, 97.

<sup>115</sup> Manor of Easton Bavents court rolls, NRA 17140 Russell Box793/1-15, 1275-1557 (with gaps), BA; Manor of Easton Bavents accounts, V5/19/1/1.1-1.17, 1330-1466 (with gaps), SA.

<sup>116</sup> NRA 17140 Box793/1.

destruction of buildings through coastal erosion or storm activity around the date which correlates with the record of no loss of arable land in the ‘Nonarum Inquisitiones’. A couple of houses were lost to erosion in 1343 and in the mid-1370s possibly five houses were lost after storms but otherwise the accounts contain little evidence of erosion and the consequences of storm activity.<sup>117</sup> Likewise, they do not refer to any upkeep of, or repairs to, marsh or river walls, which leads to the deduction that the manor of Easton had not been involved in reclamation of the salt marshes or the building of sea walls for defence at this period.<sup>118</sup> They do provide clear evidence of both a marine salt marsh at Easton, located within the tidal estuary, and a demesne turbary and customary tenants owing turbary work to the manor in the period prior to the Black Death, along with the cutting of reeds.<sup>119</sup> The court rolls provide plentiful evidence of the illegal removal of reeds from the lord’s marshes at ‘Southfen’ and ‘Northfen’.<sup>120</sup>

The account for 1330-1 contains details of expenditure on houses and shops and expenditure on new facilities associated with the market established by Thomas de Bawent in 1330. The market shops and stalls are described as ‘roofing and ridging *dil Tolbooth iuxta mar*’, evidence that the marketplace was situated next to the sea, supporting Fox’s argument that this was to facilitate the sale of fish and goods being unloaded close by.<sup>121</sup> The accounts from 1357 start to record annual receipts from tolls of the Hythe, which must relate to trade at the market and the port of Easton. It is known that the manor of Easton held land in Northales, and a Geoffrey de Cove was associated with Easton and not Northales in 1327 and c.1340s. Therefore, references to the Hythe possibly relate to the Hythe being physically located on the Northales side of the haven, on land which was part of the manor of Easton, although there is no confirmation of this within the accounts.<sup>122</sup>

The accounts also record receipts from various sized marine vessels visiting Easton, along with accompanying descriptors of two distinct areas of navigable water. In 1395-6 a ship (*naut*) paid to visit ‘*le Havene hoc anno in mare*’ and two boats (*batill*) paid

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<sup>117</sup> V5/19/1/1.2, 1.6, 1.7.

<sup>118</sup> The experience of storm surges affecting lands bordering the Thames estuary and the costs and means of flooding defences are discussed more fully by Galloway. James A. Galloway, ‘Storm Flooding, Coastal Defence and Land Use around the Thames Estuary and Tidal River c.1250–1450’, *Journal of Medieval History* 35, no. 2 (2009): 171–88, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmedhist.2008.12.001>.

<sup>119</sup> V5/19/1/1.1.

<sup>120</sup> NRA 17140 Box793/1.

<sup>121</sup> V5/19/1/1.1.

<sup>122</sup> Annual receipts for fixed assize rents are recorded from Northales. Hythe is spelt ‘*dil Hethe*’ (1356-7), ‘*le Heythe*’ (1376-7), ‘*Hythe*’ (1377-8). V5/19/1/1.4-1.7.

to be ‘*in Marr*’.<sup>123</sup> The fact that the larger vessel visited ‘*le Haven*’, reinforces its association with deeper water at the seaward end of the estuary near to where the market had been established. Likewise, the explicit association of the smaller ‘boats’ with the marsh or mere, sometimes described as ‘*marra domini*’ or the lord’s marsh, implies shallower waters within the Easton river.<sup>124</sup> The geographical positioning of these waters will be discussed further in the next chapter. The court rolls document disputes over the ownership of fishing nets which were sometimes being claimed as wreck having been found on the seashore.<sup>125</sup>

The size of the manorial arable demesne is not given in the accounts, although less than one hundred acres were sown each year which might indicate arable of c.140 acres, which is not large but reflects that the sandy soil is not particularly fertile and suited for grain production. The typical Sandlings crops of wheat, rye, oats and peas are recorded as being sown on the demesne at various points during the century.<sup>126</sup> The manorial courts regularly contain typical agricultural transgressions such as allowing cows, horses and sheep to trample standing grain. The ploughing of headlands and markers is also recorded.<sup>127</sup> Two distinct areas of heathland are mentioned in relation to the grazing of sheep and the supply of fuel, such as bracken, gorse and furze. The North and South Hethes (heaths) provided large pasture grounds, not only for the lord’s flock of sheep (which in 1370 numbered around 300), but for sheep belonging to Blythburgh Priory (numbering 200 at one point) and also for beasts belonging to the residents of both Easton and Northales.<sup>128</sup> After the Black Death the South Hetha was associated with a demesne rabbit warren, which correlates with the opening up of the market for rabbits and the warming of the climate in the 1380s.<sup>129</sup> The North and South Hethes, which are two distinct areas surely correlate with the North and South cliffs, mentioned earlier. The existence of the small prehistoric tributary valley between the North and South cliffs must have provided a

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<sup>123</sup> A *Navis* (*naut*) is a generalised term for a ship with *Batella* (*batill*) being used as a term for a smaller variety of fishing vessel. David Butcher, *Rigged for River and Sea: A Researcher’s Guide to Late Medieval and Early-Modern Terms, Relating to Fishing and Associated Trades and Derived Mainly From English Sources* (Hull: North Atlantic Fisheries History Association, 2008), 12, 130.

<sup>124</sup> V5/19/1/1.11, 1.13.

<sup>125</sup> NRA 17140 Box793/1.

<sup>126</sup> Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, 1:76–77.

<sup>127</sup> NRA 17140 Box793/1

<sup>128</sup> V5/19/1/1.1-1.3.

<sup>129</sup> Mark Bailey, ‘The Rabbit and the Medieval East Anglian Economy’, *The Agricultural History Review* 36, no. 1 (1988): 1–20.

natural division between two areas of heathland stretching eastwards to the sea (Figure 3).

Evidence of physical, man-made structures and named arable enclosures appears within the accounts and provides a further tangible sense of the community and its workings. For example, the position of the church is identified in a chance reference to '*the warren called le Southethe with le Clyffe opposite the church there*'.<sup>130</sup> The manor had mills in both Easton and Northales which further enforces the sense that these two communities had close and strong links. Along with the market buildings and houses there are references to '*le Renters apud Mare*', fishing shacks by the sea, and a '*domus*' used for the storage of wreck and fish.<sup>131</sup> Arable enclosures within open strip fields are listed, named 'Fenpittel, Osgodspitel and Clubbardscroft, providing both topographical, nominal and locational evidence.<sup>132</sup> Easton operated an irregular field system as opposed to two or three common fields on rotation which allowed for blocks of unsown arable land to be composted by folded sheep.<sup>133</sup>

The occupational surnames of those mentioned within the manorial rolls reflect the manors mix of agricultural, industrial and maritime pursuits. There are mentions of le Deye, le Shepherd, Faber, le Parmenter, le Tailour and le Wrighte. Maritime exploits are indicated by the mention of one Benedict le Shipwright and visitors from the Low Countries by the presence of one Alan Fleming. Locative surnames point to mainly local migration into the community, such as de Cove, de Frostenden and de Dunwich with one mention of de Horham, a Suffolk vill near Eye, approximately 25 miles from Easton Bavents.<sup>134</sup>

The manorial accounts provide evidence of the economic resources relating to the Bavents manor and not of the entire community at Easton Bavents. Its output was primarily geared to the supply of the needs for the manorial household with the supply of quantities of food and fuel and generated around £15 per year surplus cash. The accounts do, however, provide important tangible references to the topography and the economics of Easton in the fourteenth century. Although the lord of the manor

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<sup>130</sup> V5/19/1/1.13.

<sup>131</sup> V5/19/1/1.2.

<sup>132</sup> A William Clubbard is listed in the 1327 Subsidy Return for Estone. This return will be discussed in more detail in later chapters. Sydenham Henry Augustus Hervey, *Suffolk in 1327, Being a Subsidy Return*, vol. II, Suffolk Green Books, IX (Woodbridge: George Booth, 1906), 75.

<sup>133</sup> The field system and foldcourse system operated in East Anglia is discussed in more detail by Belcher; John Belcher, *The Foldcourse and East Anglian Agriculture and Landscape, 1100-1900* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, Incorporated, 2020), 9–13.

<sup>134</sup> NRA 17140 Box793/1.

himself was not actively engaged in fishing (there are tangible references within the accounts), Easton residents were, and the accounts confirm the existence of the haven and further maritime activities. The maritime pursuits of the community increase during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and will be expanded upon and discussed more fully in Chapter 6.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to provide an understanding of both the physical and human background factors which have shaped and moulded the landscape of Easton Bavents and its immediate locality before 1400. For a chronological timeline of these pertinent events and to c.1680 see Appendix 6.

During the Anglian Glaciation, the melting ice sheets carved out numerous valleys running west to east on the Suffolk coastline, allowing the formation of the river and estuarine system, which is still evident today in what is described as a dynamic coastline. The marine crags and glacial wash of the coastline geology in north Suffolk has not been a static environment. Over the c.450,000 years, since their formation the rivers and estuaries have been constantly altered and shaped by the effects of the sea, eroding cliffs and the accretion of sand and shingle bars, spits and nesses. Important evidence of early human habitation has been found in the area around the Easton river and its eroded and (now submerged) riverbed, from prehistoric hominid bones to Bronze Age deer artwork. Although settlements were founded on the coast, archaeological finds have shown the estuarine areas of north Suffolk, including between Northales and Easton, provided the Romans and Anglo-Saxons with opportunities to penetrate and settle further inland.

In 1086, Easton was a relatively small, probably nucleated, settlement positioned on a North Sea promontory characterised by sandy cliffs: what came to be known as Easton Ness. On the northern side of the ness was the estuary of the Easton river leading to the seaport of Frostenden, three miles inland. Northales was situated on slightly higher ground across the estuary to the north. The evidence of Viking side rudders found in the eroded, submerged riverbed provides confirmation that the river was navigable from the estuary entrance during the tenth and early eleventh centuries. Post 1086 the port at Frostenden disappeared, which combined with the lack of references to a port or haven at Easton or Northales during the period of the twelfth to the mid thirteenth century strongly indicates that the Easton river was not navigable at this date. It is likely that the mouth of the river had become completely or

partially blocked by a shingle barrier in the late eleventh century, which is consistent with the formation of the Southmere lying behind it.

At some point during the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century the morphology of the estuary changed once again. The foundation of the market next to the sea in 1330 and the references to ships in the haven and to boats in the mere, confirm a change to the estuarine topography which now allowed access once more to the lower stretches of the river. It is impossible to reconstruct a definite configuration of the river, its estuary and the associated 'Ness' at Easton in c.1300 from the extant sources. However, dramatic changes to the estuary of the Easton river around this time is consistent with current research and evidence relating to the severe and frequent storm surges which occurred after 1280, and the effects of these and the associated dramatic and complex changing morphology of the East Anglian coastline.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Bailey, Wain, and Sear, 'The Transformation of the Suffolk Coast'.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Topography evidenced in maps, charts and written navigational aids to c.1613**

#### **Introduction**

Important evidence of the topography of the northeast Suffolk coast is contained within manuscript maps, charts and written navigational aids prior to 1600, but to date this material has attracted little academic study.<sup>136</sup> Cartographical techniques were crude before advances were made in the early sixteenth century, and so there is limited confidence in the accuracy of the information contained within early maps and charts.<sup>137</sup> However, used sensitively and cautiously, these can yield material which can be used to complement evidence from other sources in the attempts to reconstruct the historical evolution of the coastline. The coastline is not a static environment, and such an examination allows a discussion regarding the complex evolving topography and ultimately the cause and effect on the fortunes of both the wider coastline and Easton Bavents itself. Maps can provide important topographical detail within the confines of the coastline, whilst charts and navigational aids offer the visual topography of the coastline itself, as viewed from the sea, and highlight defence plans, river estuaries, low lying land and visual coastal references.

An initial aim of this thesis was to examine the delineation of Easton Bavents and its associated promontory of Easton Ness within these mediums, allowing a timeline of change to be built up. A discussion of the rationale for the creation of the maps and charts and the provenance of the surveying used within them are vital aspects to discuss when drawing up such a timeline. For the stretch of Suffolk coastline from

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<sup>136</sup> A few pre 1600 manuscript maps detailing Orford Ness have been discussed, see; *Orford Ness, A Selection of Maps Mainly by John Norden, Presented to James Alfred Steers* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd, 1966).

<sup>137</sup> A study of mapmaking in England by Barber concludes that there was little evidence of a significant cartographic presence in England in the late fifteenth century due to the scarcity of surviving reference in archival study. A statement Barber concedes is challenged by other researchers including Delano-Smith and Kain. Peter Barber, 'Mapmaking in England ca. 1470-1650', in *History of Cartography*, vol. Vol 3. pt 2. Chapter 54 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 1589, [https://press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC\\_V3\\_Pt2/Volume3\\_Part2.html](https://press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC_V3_Pt2/Volume3_Part2.html); Catherine Delano-Smith, R. J. P. (Roger J. P.) Kain, and British Library., *English Maps: A History*, The British Library Studies in Map History, v. 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 28–29.

Gorleston to Southwold, no hand drawn maps or charts of the coastline drawn at a large scale, providing clear topographical detail, are extant, prior to 1539. However, smaller scale maps and charts of England, have survived within the corpus of early world mapping.<sup>138</sup> The topography evidenced within a selection of these maps, charts and navigational aids, focusing on the north-east Suffolk section and in particular Easton, is discussed here along with identified post 1539 material.

### Ptolemy c.122 CE

The ness at Easton Bavents has often been cited as the location of the only 'extensio' or promontory on the British coastline, plotted by the Alexandrian, Claudius Ptolemaeus (Ptolemy), c.122 CE.<sup>139</sup> Ptolemy had attempted to map the known world plotting co-ordinates of locations in terms of latitude and longitude. No maps from the second century have been discovered illustrating Ptolemy's work, although he must have drawn maps (or had them drawn) to have been able to spatially visualise this data.<sup>140</sup> The geographical locational data for Great Britain would have been supplied to him along with that of the known Roman Empire of the time. Ptolemy's work was rediscovered c.1295 and from c.1464 maps were re-drawn using his spatial data.<sup>141</sup> The Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex locations detailed by Ptolemy, listed north to south, were 'Metaris Aest' (The Wash), 'Venta', (the Roman town of Caistor St Edmund, Norfolk), 'ost. Gariennus Fl.' (the River Yare) and 'Camulodunum', the Roman town of Colchester in Essex. Ptolemy also plotted the promontory called 'Extensio', geographically positioned between the River Yare and Colchester and an unidentified river mouth 'ost. Eidumanis Fl.'<sup>142</sup> See Figure 4 for a visual representation of Ptolemy's work.

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<sup>138</sup> An example being a map of the British Isles by Matthew Paris, c.1250, Cotton MS Claudius D. vi., f. 12v, British Library (BL).

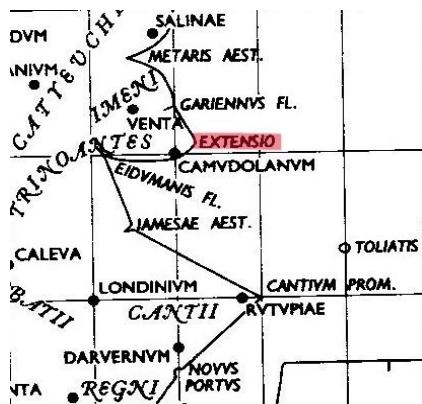
<sup>139</sup> First cited by Camden, 1586. William Camden, *Britannia Sive Florentissimorum Regnorum, Angliae, Scotiae, Hiberniae, et Insularum Adiacentium Ex Intima Antiquitate Chorographica Descriptio* (Londini: Per Radulphum Newbery. Cum gratia & priuilegio Regiae Maiestatis, 1586), 259. Then by successive antiquarians and historians; Gardner, *An Historical Account of Dunwich*, 257; Suckling, *History and Antiquities of Suffolk*, 2:307.

<sup>140</sup> Alastair Strang, 'Explaining Ptolemy's Roman Britain', *Britannia* 28 (1997): 1–3, <https://doi.org/10.2307/526763>.

<sup>141</sup> Strang, 1; 'The Geography of Ptolemy', Roman Britain, accessed 29 May 2023, <https://www.roman-britain.co.uk/classical-references/the-geography-of-ptolemy/>.

<sup>142</sup> Ptolemy's Greek text has been translated into Latin. 'The Geography of Ptolemy'.

Figure 4 – Placement of Ptolemy's 'extensio'



Source - Section from The British Isles According to Ptolemy, Ordnance Survey, *Map of Roman Britain* (Ordnance Survey, 1978), 15.

In the 1610 edition of his 'Britannia', William Camden referred to Ptolemy's 'extensio' being located at Easton-Nesse, as at that date it is 'deemed to bee the farthest east point in all Britaine'.<sup>143</sup> Camden provides no further evidence for this statement although it is acknowledged he displayed an early interest in the work of Ptolemy. In 2023, Strang lists Orfordness as the likely location of this promontory but again does not provide any further evidence as to why.<sup>144</sup> It is not possible to say with certainty where this promontory was exactly situated in c.122 CE on the Suffolk/north Essex coast. It is important to note that for the occupying Romans, somewhere between Great Yarmouth and Colchester there was a large promontory, of enough significance to be included.<sup>145</sup>

### Written Navigational Texts 1190 and c.1470s.

In 1190, the Chronicler Roger of Howden recorded written details of a seaborne crusade route from York to Jerusalem. The section which details his coastal journey from York to Dartmouth describes the visual, identifiable, east coast physical landmarks which would aid navigation of the sandbanks and estuaries, which are also

<sup>143</sup> William Camden, *Britain: Or, a Chorographical Description of the Most Flourishing Kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the Ilands Adioyning, Out of the Depth of Antiquitie: Beavtified with Mappes...* ([Eliot's Court Press] impensis Georgii Bishop & Ioannis Norton, 1610), 467.

<sup>144</sup> Strang, 'Explaining Ptolemy's Roman Britain', 23, 30.

<sup>145</sup> Steerwood, in discussing the location of the Roman town Sitomagus, discusses the convergence of Roman roads in the Dunwich area in relation to the 'extensio' of Ptolemy. Robert Steerwood, 'A Context For Sitomagus: Romano-British Settlement In The Suffolk Mid-Coastal Area', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* XL, no. 3 (2003): 255.

listed.<sup>146</sup> It is recognised that his directions of the English coast, in the weeks before Easter 1190 are unique.<sup>147</sup> The description of the coastline, after passing the port of Yarmouth, and before reaching Dunwich has been translated and transcribed as follows,

“Then comes Kukeleinese [Kirkley] ten miles distant from Germenne [Yarmouth], and the route passes by there. Then, for twelve miles is a certain low ground called Spillwaterhuys and the route passes by there. And opposite [there] in the sea, about a mile off from land, is a certain sandbank called Edelwaldese. Then there is a certain low foreland called Assemerchse. Then comes Donewiz [Dunwich], a good town but a poor port”.<sup>148</sup>

Kirkley and Dunwich are identifiable fixed points on the coastline, and it is worth noting the ‘nese’ (ness) is described at Kirkley and not placed further south at Easton. The twelve miles of low ground from Kirkley called ‘spillwaterhuys’, encompassed the parishes of Pakefield, Kessingland, Benacre and possibly Covehithe, depending on the accuracy of the given milage, would indicate that low lying ground was visible from the sea and not sandy cliffs. In navigational terms to ‘spill’ is to take the wind out of your sails, therefore this stretch of coastline may have offered the chance of shelter to sailing vessels.<sup>149</sup> The sandbank called ‘Edelwaldese’, one mile off land is harder to locate geographically however, it is reasonable to assume this is the sandbank which by 1539 is known as the ‘Barnard Sand’ and lying just off Easton Ness.<sup>150</sup> Before reaching the port of Dunwich a low foreland or promontory is described called ‘assemerchse’ (a sea marsh), an area of low-lying salt marsh projecting into the sea. Here again, the coast in the region of Easton, Walberswick and Southwold is described as ‘low lying’, but with evidence of it being marshy it would be prone to

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<sup>146</sup> Howdens original text has been lost but a fifteenth century copy held in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS. Lat. 3123 fos. 134v–155v, was brought to light by Patrick Gautier Dalche. Paul Hughes, ‘Roger of Howden’s Sailing Directions for the English Coast’, *Historical Research* 85, no. 230 (2012): 576–96.

<sup>147</sup> Hughes, 576.

<sup>148</sup> Hughes, 591.

<sup>149</sup> Kirkley Roads were the inshore reaches of the sea and in a charter of 1372 were annexed to the port of Great Yarmouth when the entrance to the port of Yarmouth was located just north of Corton, some 8-9 miles distant. Yarmouth was experiencing obstruction of its port by a shingle spit which was developing southwards from the port entrance. Kirkley Roads provided a safe anchorage for vessels in times of bad weather. David Butcher, *Medieval Lowestoft: The Origins and Growth of a Suffolk Coastal Community* (Boydell and Brewer, 2016), 142–44.

<sup>150</sup> A plan of the Suffolk coastline dated 1539 is discussed more fully later in this chapter. Walde means wood which points to a connection with Southwold (South Wood). Briggs and Kilpatrick, *A Dictionary of Suffolk Place-Names*, 6:125.

changes caused by flooding, accretion and erosion. As discussed earlier (in relation to a lost cartulary of Butley Priory) in 1236/7, at the boundary between Northales (Covehithe) and Easton was the Southmere, an area of water and marsh, consistent with the above description of low ground and sea marsh.<sup>151</sup>

Later written instructions for the navigation of the east coast of England, c.1470, along with earlier directions for most of the European coastline, have survived within a Low German text commonly known as *Das Seebuch*.<sup>152</sup> The texts, known as 'rutters', were compiled by mariners from Northern Brittany before being handed down and later additions being added by Hanseatic sailors.<sup>153</sup> Examination of the section detailing the journey between the ports of Yarmouth, Norfolk and the Orwell, Suffolk provides further evidence of the importance of Kirkley to sailors and their navigation of the sandbanks and hazards of the northeast Suffolk coast. The places listed of importance are, 'a pointed spire [Lowestoft St Margaret's] between Southtown [Gorleston] and Kirkley'; a 'stumpy church tower' and 'red cliffs' at Kirkley; and at Orford, 'a castle, large tower and Orfordness'. Deeper water channels called the 'St Nicholas Deep' and the 'St Andrew Deep' and sandbanks called the 'Holm Sand' and 'the new ground' are also noted lying off Yarmouth.<sup>154</sup>

Between Kirkley and Orford only one sandbank is listed and is described as 'off the Orwell (sic) lies a nasty sand [bank] a German mile from land'. The reference to the Orwell must surely be a scribal error for the Blyth. If this is the case, this is further reference to what is known as the 'Barnard Sand' lying one mile from the coast in the locality of Easton and Southwold.<sup>155</sup> The changing topography of the coastline can be witnessed when the c.1470 *Seebuch* is compared with the descriptions from Howden's 1190 text. Instead of flat land at Kirkley there are now 'red cliffs' which indicate that the 'nesse' at Kirkley has been eroded leaving the cliffs adjacent to the seashore. There is no mention of the port of Dunwich which is well documented as having suffered catastrophic erosion and accretion of its port during the later thirteenth century. Finally, the evidence of a sandbank called 'the new ground' is indicative of

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<sup>151</sup> Suckling, *History and Antiquities of Suffolk*, 2:305.

<sup>152</sup> A fully accessible digital copy of both the original text, transcription and translation can be found on the website of the National Maritime Museum of Germany. 'Seebuch', Deutsches Schifffahrts Museum (German Maritime Museum), accessed 28 June 2023, <https://www.dsm.museum/seebuch/>.

<sup>153</sup> Albrecht Sauer, 'The Medieval Low-German "Seebuch": The Earliest Northwest European Sailing Direction and its Principles of Navigation', in *Arte de Navegar – Nautical Science 1400-1800* (Arte de Navegar – Nautical Science 1400-1800, Departamento de Matemática da FCTUC, 2014), 15, <https://hdl.handle.net/10316/44528>.

<sup>154</sup> 'Seebuch', 35v–37r.

<sup>155</sup> 'Seebuch', 36v XIV.28.

the accumulation of a new bank, the result of coastal erosion and tidal flows elsewhere on the coastline. What is not listed is Easton Ness or any reference to a promontory of this nature.

Therefore, neither Easton Ness nor a harbour at Easton feature in *Das Seebuch*, indeed this omission is repeated in the earliest 'rutter' written in English dating from c.1460-1470.<sup>156</sup> The only places mentioned on the south Norfolk and north Suffolk coastline are Winterton and Kirkley Roads, reinforcing the importance of Kirkley to sailors plotting courses on this stretch of coastline.

As stated earlier in Chapter 2, Easton gained a market charter in 1330 leading to the belief that after the recorded storm surges of the 1280s there had been changes to the coastline, enhancing the access to a haven at Easton.<sup>157</sup> The main focus of these documents was providing advice to sailors on negotiating the port of Yarmouth and its dependant outlier of the Kirkley Roads to its south. It is likely that the rutters were compiled for larger craft that were unlikely to have much commercial interest in the smaller ports and havens on the north Suffolk coast.

### **Portolan Charts, 1375 and 1469**

Portolan charts are a special kind of sea chart, drawn up as working tools for practical navigation, first developed in the thirteenth century and which continued to be used until the eighteenth century.<sup>158</sup> Identifiable by criteria which include being manuscript and not printed, they are generally drawn on vellum, and contain directional navigation lines called rhumb lines. To emphasize use at sea, coastal place-names are written on the land side of the coastline with minimum interior detail provided. The plan for this thesis was to examine examples of these portolan charts, to understand if Easton Ness was included and therefore gauge the importance of Easton Ness for early sailors and navigators of the coastline. Two portolan charts dated 1375 and 1469 are discussed here as indicative of the overall research findings drawn from the charts, which did not provide evidence as initially anticipated.

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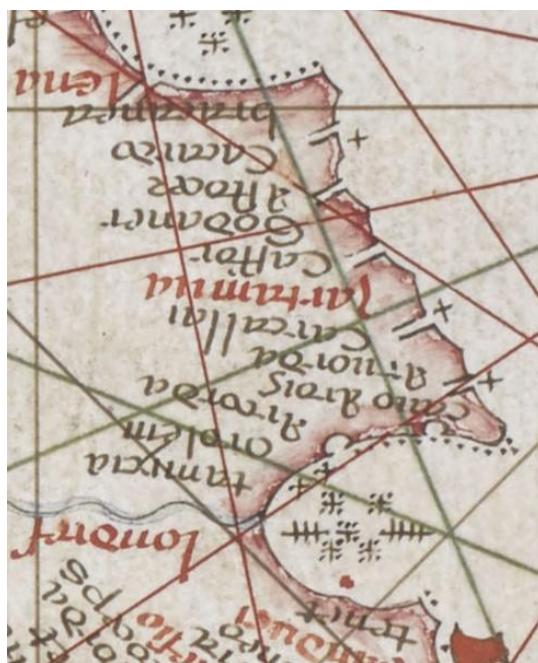
<sup>156</sup> A copy of the text had been pasted into a MSS volume by 1468-9. Robin Ward, 'The Earliest Known Sailing Directions In English', in *Deutsches Schiffahrtsarchiv* 27 (Hamburg, 2004), 49-92.

<sup>157</sup> D. A. Sear, 'Southern East Coast North Sea Storms Database', Dunwich, The Search for Britain's Atlantis, 2018, [www.dunwich.org.uk](http://www.dunwich.org.uk).

<sup>158</sup> Richard Pfleiderer, *Finding Their Way at Sea, the Story of the Portolan Charts, the Cartographers Who Drew Them and the Mariners Who Sailed By Them* (Houten: Hes & De Graaf Publishers BV, 2012), 17-18.

The coastline of East Anglia as delineated on the 1375 chart by Abraham Cresque, plots eight named places or topographical features, written in Catalan?, lying between 'Lena' (now known as Kings Lynn) and 'Orolem' (the Orwell estuary).<sup>159</sup> The coastline is depicted as a series of bays, river mouths and promontories with crosses indicating sandbanks. Two of these place names can be attributed with certainty, 'casor' (Caistor) and 'tarquelay' (Kirkley), the latter being located on a promontory. A river entrance is shown lying between them which is assumed to be the Yare. Other Suffolk names cannot be attributed with any certainty and nothing which could obviously translate as Easton or Easton Ness. The coastline of East Anglia delineated on the 1469 portolan chart by Grazio Benincasa, one of the most active Italian chart makers of his day, is remarkably similar to that of the 1375 chart discussed above.<sup>160</sup> It is widely acknowledged that chart makers copied earlier works without any attempt at new surveys. Ten places are named lying between 'Lena' and 'Oralem' and the coastline is still shown as a series of bays, river mouths and promontories. Again 'Cassor' (Caistor) and 'Carcallai' (Kirkley) are shown but this time the port of 'Jartamua' (Yarmouth) is included, written in red to denote a port of some standing. No further Suffolk names can be positively attributed (Figure 5).

Figure 5 – Section of chart by Grazio Benincasa showing the coastal area from Lena (Kings Lynn) to Londres (London)



Source – Chart of the Atlantic Coastline by Grazio Benincasa, 1469, Add MS 31315 ff.4v-5, BL.

<sup>159</sup> Abraham (1325-1387) Auteur du texte Cresques, 'Abraham Cresques ? Atlas de Cartes Marines, Dit [Atlas Catalan].' (manuscript, 1380 1370), <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55002481n>.

<sup>160</sup> Chart of the Atlantic Coastline by Grazio Benincasa, 1469, Add MS 31315 ff.4v-5, BL.

It is evident from the research into the portolan charts of the fourteenth and fifteenth century that Kirkley was of importance when navigating the Suffolk coastline. This confirms the results of the written navigational texts as discussed above. No topographical information specifically relating to Easton Ness can be attributed to any of the fifteen portolan charts examined for this thesis.<sup>161</sup> The portolan charts do provide evidence of the many rivers, promontories and associated sandbanks which made up the coastline of Suffolk but due to the nature of the re-use of earlier chart information, the dating accuracy of any movements of these sandbanks and promontories cannot be relied upon.

### Defence map, 1539

The earliest map to provide a detailed visual interpretation of the east coast from Gorleston (north) to the mouth of the River Orwell (south) is a defence map, drawn up in 1539 to assess the vulnerability of this stretch of coastline to attack.<sup>162</sup> In the early 1530s, Henry VIII was growing aware of the practical utility of mapping in identifying areas of coastline vulnerable to attack and portraying the findings in a visual manner. In February 1539, a survey was commissioned of the coastline of England, to be undertaken by local trustworthy men of each 'shire'. The survey remit was to identify places for invasion and advise where fortifications could be erected.<sup>163</sup> Draft sketches were sent centrally to court for the plans to be redrawn by skilled mapmakers such as Richard Lee. The ten commissioners, described as 'local men of the shire', appointed to oversee the surveying of the Suffolk coastline included Sir Arthur Hopton. Hopton in 1539 held several Suffolk manors including Yoxford, Blythburgh, Walberswick, Northales and Easton Bavents and he had lived at both Blythburgh and Yoxford prior to 1539. Hopton would have been very familiar with the coastline around the River Blyth, and it is reasonable to assume he would have seen

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<sup>161</sup> Examples include: 'Portolan Chart of the Mediterranean Sea, the North Atlantic Ocean, the Black Sea, and the Northwestern African Coast by Franciscus Becharius, c.1403', Yale University Library, accessed 17 July 2024, <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2005106>; British Isles by Henricus Martellus, 1490, BL; 'Composite Atlas of Portolan Charts Produced by Conte Di Ottomano Freducci, c.1536', Yale University Library, accessed 17 July 2024, <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/16823430>.

<sup>162</sup> Chart of the coast of Suffolk and Norfolk from the mouth of the River Orwell to Gorleston, 1539-40, Cotton Aug I i 58, British Library. An earlier map of the Orwell estuary dates from 1533, probably connected to the fear of invasion. Chart of Orwell Haven (Harwich), drawn by Sir Richard Lee, Cotton Aug I i 56, British Library. Barber, 'Mapmaking in England ca. 1470-1650', 1601.

<sup>163</sup> 'Defence of the Coast' (The National Archives (Kew, United Kingdom), 1539), State Papers Online, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/MC4302480413/SPOL?sid=bookmark-SPOL&xid=704a2271>.

the draft drawings for the survey. The contextual information for this survey points to it being based on strong local knowledge resulting in reasonable accuracy.

The map is, in effect, the coastline as viewed at an oblique angle from the North Sea. Barber reminds us that such a map was drawn up to aid the knowledge of the coastline and to show where fortifications needed to be erected to protect against invasion, therefore certain elements would have been exaggerated. Vulnerable beaches would be highlighted whereas impregnable cliffs would not. Strategically important man-made features such as beacons, church towers and parks where horses could be fed and watered would be shown.<sup>164</sup> See Figure 6 for details of the coastal section from Southwold (south) to Kessingland (north).

Figure 6 - Section of Henrician coastal defence chart showing Southwold to Kessingland, 1539



Source – Chart of the coast of Suffolk and Norfolk, 1539-40, Cotton Aug II 58, BL.

The settlements of Kesland [Kessingland], Co...ie [Covehithe], Easton bavyn [Easton Bavents] and Sowlde [Southwold] are clearly shown along with the Easton Ness

<sup>164</sup> Barber, 'Mapmaking in England ca. 1470-1650', 1605.

promontory and the Barnard bank just lying off the ness.<sup>165</sup> The continued presence of a major sandbank here which was described in Howden's text of 1190 and again in the Seebuch of c.1470 is significant.<sup>166</sup> Its location, off Easton would have provided some element of shelter for the sandy cliffs of the ness from the tidal effects of erosion and potentially aided accretion along other stretches of the coast. Three other 'nesses' are shown on the full plan, at Orford, Thorpe and at Lowestoft. Orford has a large tract of low-lying land fronted with a stony beach to the north and south. Thorpe has a cliff area with no sand shown between it and the sea and the ness at Lowestoft is described as Mag[n]e Nesse, indicating it was perceived as the largest or most easterly point on the coast at this date.

A beacon is shown atop a hill between Southwold and Easton with guns placed in front, facing out to sea. Further guns are shown at Easton, Covehithe, Kessingland, Pakefield and Kirkley. Written details on the map provide information regarding distances and the ease of landing at various places. The river spur shown arching round to the right behind Southwold to the boundary with Easton is described as 'from Sowld rownd to the hayvn is half a myll wyth good landyng for all westerly wynds'. Further distances are given with 'ffrome Sowlde to Easton is one myle' and 'ffrome Easton Nesthe to Kessland is almost three myles and it is lowe grounde and good landing for all westerly wyndes'. The buildings of the settlements are shown in very stylised form with houses clustered around a church and trees are shown to the west, behind Easton and Covehithe. These trees may indicate the ancient area of woodland now known as Easton Wood or the park at Henham (raised ground 2½ miles to the west of Easton) identified as suitable for a military levy and for the location of horses.<sup>167</sup> Covehithe church is shown with a steeple, as is the church at Lowestoft, and it is known that both churches had steeples at this date. These steeples and church towers would have been vital visible reference points when approaching land from the sea. No church tower is shown on the chart at Kirkley, indicating that the tower was potentially in ruin and no longer used as the navigational aid it had been in the earlier rutters and on the portolan charts discussed above. The settlement of Easton is shown at the southern end of a stretch of cliff (shown in darker brown colouring) which ends as the ness stretches out to sea. On the northern side of the ness the land is shown as low, and this is confirmed by the details of 'good landings'

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<sup>166</sup> Hughes, 'Roger of Howden's Sailing Directions for the English Coast'; 'Seebuch'.

<sup>167</sup> The manor of Henham was passed to the King in July 1538 by Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. J. Gairdner (ed), *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VII*, Vol. 13 Part 1: Jan-Jul 1538 (HMSO, London, 1892), 495, no.1329.

as noted above. There is further writing placed between Easton and Covehithe but frustratingly this is very worn and indecipherable although the words ‘...way...cliffe’ are still legible.

This image of red sandy cliffs at Easton giving way to flat ground at the ness is of great interest. On this stretch of low land to the north of the main parish both the mere and the haven were situated within the Easton river which flowed out to sea here between Easton and Covehithe. A manorial survey of 1531 describes this area as, ‘several pastures for the sheep of the lord called North Heth lying between the chapel of St Margaret the virgin and the haven between Coveheth and Eston Bawent and the Lord’s mere and the sea and 222 acres of land and pasture’.<sup>168</sup> River mouths would only be shown on the map if they led to important inland places susceptible to invasion. The Blyth estuary is shown leading to Walberswick, Dunwich and arching round to the haven at Southwold, but the river to Blythburgh and further inland is not shown. To the south on the map access up the Orwell river to Ipswich is depicted, as is Orford Castle via Orford haven. The haven between Easton and Covehithe was not advantageous to a raiding party as the river was not navigable inland for any distance and therefore is not shown, although the dangerous flat ground and ‘good landings’ surrounding it are noted.

### Maps from c.1540-1569

During Henry VIII’s reign the idea first surfaced of producing maps and itineraries of the country as a means of expressing patriotism, as opposed to being merely an aid against invasion.<sup>169</sup> John Leland toured the country during the years c.1535 to 1543, initially interested in the libraries of the disbanded monasteries, but later as an antiquarian and topographer. It was these latter tours which produced his writings, known as his ‘itineraries’, which provided descriptive accounts drawing in historical references and the remains he viewed as he travelled throughout the country. There are very few references to Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex within Leland’s Itineraries which would point to the original writings for these counties, along with those for most of London, having been lost or they lie undiscovered in a library or archive. It is said of the Itineraries ‘not even a ghost of an itinerary through Suffolk can be reconstructed

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<sup>168</sup> Discussed in Chapter 1, Introduction. Survey, c.1431-1531.

<sup>169</sup> Barber, ‘Mapmaking in England ca. 1470-1650’, 1620.

from the meagre fragments about the county which survive among Leland's notes.<sup>170</sup> Of the small amount written regarding Suffolk, it is clear Leland talked to Arthur Hopton, of Blythburgh and Lord of the Manor of Easton Bavents c.1521-1555. Leland describes the area around the River Blyth with reference to John Bale, born at Cove(hithe).<sup>171</sup>

In c.1564 Laurence Nowell produced a map of Suffolk portraying the extending land mass of Easton Ness in some detail and provided a visual delineation of the coastline viewed from above, rather than at the oblique angle of the 1539 chart discussed earlier. The map was one of a series of more detailed maps in a pocket book, which in essence, was an atlas of the British Isles, with pages starting in Cornwall and moving eastwards across the country and then upwards as in a modern road atlas of today.<sup>172</sup> With access to the earlier defence maps of Henry VIII it can be assumed that Nowell drew on them along with his own research when producing his maps and he emphasised the antiquity of the English people by providing place-names in an archaised Anglo-Saxon spelling.<sup>173</sup> See Figure 7 for the map of the north Suffolk section.

**Figure 7 – Section of north Suffolk from the Laurence Nowell Sketches c. 1564**



Source - Cotton MS Domitian [A] xviii, f.120r, BL.

<sup>170</sup> J. Leland and J. Chandler, *John Leland's Itinerary: Travels in Tudor England* (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1993), 446–47.

<sup>171</sup> 'Bale, John (1495–1563), Bishop of Ossory, Evangelical Polemicist, and Historian', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, accessed 20 July 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1175>.

<sup>172</sup> Nowell Sketches, c.1564, Cotton MS Domitian [A] xviii, fols 110v-123r, BL. The Suffolk folio is at 120r.

<sup>173</sup> Barber, 'Mapmaking in England ca. 1470-1650', 1622; Peter J Lucas, 'William Camden, Seventeenth-Century Atlases of the British Isles and the Printing of Anglo-Saxon', *The Antiquaries Journal* 98 (2018): 220–21.

The visual strategic promontory of *Estunnesse* [Easton Ness] is clearly shown on the coast of Suffolk; *Sapald* [Southwold], *Palderwic* [Walberswick], *Bliburh* [Blythburgh] and *Dunwic* [Dunwich] are also shown with their archaised spelling. The estuarine opening situated between *Gorlestun* [Gorleston] and Easton Ness is geographically placed to be that of the Hundred river, south of Kessingland. The land mass of the parishes of Easton Bavents and Southwold is shown as a bulbous overhang of the Blyth river and along with the area of the Waveney river valley stretching from *Burgh* [Burgh Castle] to *Hoxnea* [Hoxne] both are shown in some detail when compared to the interior of the county. It cannot be determined how much of the detail on this map is from Nowell's interpretation of the Henrician charts or from his own land surveys, but the prominence of the ness at Easton is unmistakable. William Lambarde, a friend of Nowell and one of the executors of his will, had his work on Anglo-Saxon laws, *Archaionomia*, printed in 1568 by John Day who was reputedly born at Dunwich.<sup>174</sup> A wood cut of a map of England and Wales at the front of the volume, drawn by Nowell, only names two places in north Suffolk, Easton Ness and Dunwich, emphasising the importance of these places within Lambarde's work.

Hence the mapping of the Suffolk coastline in the 1550s and 1560s is consistent in the importance given to Easton Ness as a prominent topographical feature of the Suffolk coastline. This continued as cartographical techniques and production increased in the last quarter of the century. An 'atlas', collated in the early 1570s and finally published in 1589 by the important Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator (1512-1594) illustrates this point quite succinctly.<sup>175</sup> This 'atlas' was in essence a scrapbook compiled by Mercator from his previously published standalone maps along with a few from his friend and rival Ortelius. It included maps of Suffolk dating from 1554, 1564 and 1569 (Figure 8 (a-c), sections from these maps).

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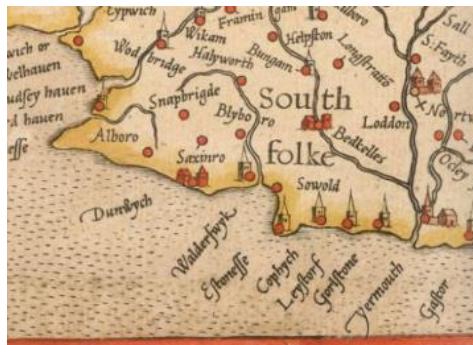
<sup>174</sup> William Lambarde, *Archaionomia, Siue de Priscis Anglorum Legibus Libri* (London, 1568); 'Day [Daye], John (1521/2–1584), Printer and Bookseller', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, accessed 22 July 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7367>. Day owned lands in Suffolk and had the rights to publish Nowell's work.

<sup>175</sup> Mercator's Atlas of Europe, C.29.c.13, British Library, 1570s. Gerardus Mercator was known for embodying the Mercator projection and for introducing the term atlas for a collection of maps. 'Turning the Pages™', British Library, accessed 22 July 2022, <https://www.bl.uk/turning-the-pages/?id=223c7af8-bad6-4282-a684-17bf45bd0311&type=book>.

**Figure 8 (a-c) – Sections from Gerardus Mercator's atlas, 1554-1569**



8(a) – 1554 – Map of the British Isles (section)



8(b) – 1564 – Map of England (section)



8(c) – 1569 – Map of the World (section)

Source – Mercator's atlas from 'Turning the Pages™ - British Library', [www.bl.uk/turning-the-pages](https://www.bl.uk/turning-the-pages)

In the 1554 map Osteness is located just north of Dunwich which confirms its identification as Easton Ness.<sup>176</sup> The 1564 map of England was engraved and published by Mercator, but he acknowledges that the map itself was given to him by a 'friend'. John Elder, a Scottish clergyman, and John Rudd, a Yorkshireman, are credited as the surveyors upon whose work Mercator's map is based, as in 1554 they were employed to survey the country.<sup>177</sup> The Suffolk coastline is shown in some detail in 1564, and the spelling of Easton Ness has been updated from that in 1554. The ness is given more prominence when the coastline of Suffolk is examined on the 1569

<sup>176</sup> The 1554 British Isles map was possibly based on the 1546 map by Englishman George Lily, published in Rome. The same image is found on a map of northern France surveyed in 1538 by the Frenchman Oronce Fine. 'Turning the Pages™ - British Library', accessed 22 July 2022, <https://www.bl.uk/turning-the-pages/?id=223c7af8-bad6-4282-a684-17bf45bd0311&type=book>.

<sup>177</sup> Barber, 'Mapmaking in England ca. 1470-1650', 1622.

world map, although spelling would indicate that the information was taken from the 1554 map. The fact that the only place in Suffolk named is Easton Ness provides a clear indication that the ness c.1554 was an important navigational reference point and was still a promontory stretching out into the sea.

### **Saxton's map, 1575**

The mapping of England and Wales between 1573 and 1578 has bestowed almost mythical status on Christopher Saxon as 'the father of English cartography'. William Cecil, now Lord Burghley, was still striving for a national mapping survey and engaged Saxton to undertake such a survey which started in 1573. Saxton's map of Suffolk, published in 1575, delineates more precision and great change in the topography at Easton Bavents. The ness is still depicted as an important visual promontory stretching out to the east, but it is the appearance of a 'tadpole' shaped, enclosed stretch of water, lying between Easton and Covehithe which is the most striking additional feature of the area under discussion. This must be the former Easton river, now blocked off from the sea by a shingle bar or marshy land and potentially flooding backwards creating a large tract of water lying in the river valley. If this depiction is accurate, then direct access from the sea to the haven and mere and inland towards Cove would no longer be possible.<sup>178</sup> A document dated to 1583, describes a stretch of land at Easton as 'it abutteth Long Acre towards the East and upon the common meare called the myle meare towards the west'.<sup>179</sup> This description of a mere, a mile in length, surely describes the area of water illustrated on Saxtons 1575 map and provides some authentication as to the accuracy in depicting the silting up of the former haven (Figures 9 (a-b)).

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<sup>178</sup> This enclosed water is erroneously described by Pye and Blott in their study using Saxton's map as evidence that 'despite periodic blocking by shingle, the havens at Minsmere, Easton and Kessingland were open to the sea at this time'. Kenneth Pye and Simon J. Blott, 'Coastal Processes and Morphological Change in the Dunwich-Sizewell Area, Suffolk, UK', *Journal of Coastal Research* 22, no. 3 (2006): 461.

<sup>179</sup> Rental of the possessions of the dissolved Augustinian Priory of Blythburgh, co. Suff., 1582-1583, Add MS 48382, BL.

**Figures 9 (a & b) – Sections from Christopher Saxton's maps of Norfolk and Suffolk, 1574 and 1575**

Figure 9 (a) – Norfolk map (section), showing Easton ness and 'tadpole' area, 1574



Figure 9 (b) – Suffolk map (section), showing Easton ness and 'tadpole' area, 1575



Source - Christopher Saxton and W. L. D. Ravenhill, *Christopher Saxton's 16th Century Maps : The Counties of England and Wales* (Shrewsbury: Chatsworth Library, 1992).

The Saxton county map for Norfolk is dated 1574 by the engraver and it is thought by many to have been surveyed before the map of Suffolk, dated 1575 on the engraving. There is however some disagreement within the cartographic world as to the order in which the country was surveyed and therefore the dating of the maps.<sup>180</sup> The map of Norfolk included the north-east section of Suffolk covering the coastal area from Gorleston in the north to Dunwich in the south and due to this, Andrews concludes that Suffolk had been surveyed first.<sup>181</sup> Close examination of the two maps reveals there are subtle differences in the depiction of this north-eastern corner and these differences provide grounds for challenging Andrew's chronology. The 1574 Norfolk map omits known features which are associated with the Blyth river and its estuarine area near Southwold; the spur heading southwards to Dunwich and the spur now known as Buss Creek heading northwards to Easton. These details are correctly depicted on the Suffolk map, suggesting that Saxton corrected these amendments prior to the engraving of the Suffolk map which was surveyed after that of Norfolk. In correcting these elements, it follows Saxton would have ensured the delineation of the ness at Easton and the key marine features around it were also accurate. A crucial factor of this mapping exercise was to achieve a greater understanding and clearer delineation of the coastline.

### Mapping, 1584-c.1600

There was further tension between England and other state powers during the 1580s, notably Spain and its Armada attempts at invasion. Mapping the coastline continued to be of great importance and a chart produced by Richard Poulter in 1584 provides visual evidence of further changes to the topography of the coastline at Easton Bavents.<sup>182</sup> Poulter described himself on the chart as 'of the presinete of sainte Katteris by London, marryner' and it is thought the chart was drawn up as both a navigational aid and for defence purposes.<sup>183</sup> Poulter provided detailed information on the sandbanks around the coast, shown as a series of dots, and notes the depth of the water (soundings) close to the shore to enable easy landing places to be identified.

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<sup>180</sup> Barber notes that other Saxton maps in the collection do not appear in the same sequence as the surveys. Barber, 'Mapmaking in England ca. 1470-1650', 1627 (see fn. 283).

<sup>181</sup> J. H. Andrews, 'A Saxton Miscellany', *Imago Mundi* 65, no. 1 (2013): 225.

<sup>182</sup> Poulter became Master of Trinity House in 1599. Chart of the East Coast of England by Richard Poulter, 1584, Cotton Augustus, I i 44, British Library.

<sup>183</sup> Sarah Tyacke, 'Chartmaking in England and Its Context', in *The History of Cartography, Cartography in the European Renaissance*, ed. David Woodward, vol. 3 (Part 2) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1734.

Colours are used to denote the stability of the sandbanks, and the subsequently complex drawings must have resulted from an in-depth survey of the coast conducted from vessels at sea. Figure 10 contains a section of the Suffolk coastline taken from the chart.

Figure 10 – Section from Richard Poulter’s chart of the Suffolk coastline from Dunwich to Gorleston, 1584



Source – Chart of the East Coast of England by Richard Poulter, 1584, Cotton Aug. I i 44, BL.

The map is instructive on two counts. First, no haven is depicted between Easton and Covehithe, while the Blyth and Dunwich harbour, and the port at Yarmouth are clearly displayed. Secondly, the promontory at 'Essun' [Easton Bavents], lying between 'Sowell' [Southwold] and 'Cohethe' [Covehithe] is clearly displayed with the additional detail of sand shown at the foot of the northern end of the ness and a narrow stretch of sea with a depth of 1 ½ fathoms between its tip and 'ye barnard' sandbank. Immediately to the left of the ness is the ghost of an earlier shape, extending from the mouth of the Blyth river at Southwold. This indicates that Poulter originally sketched information from a previous chart showing the ness as a larger feature and extending further to the south as it did on the c.1564 map by Nowell.<sup>184</sup> Comparison with the earlier 1539 defence chart also shows that the Barnard sandbank had unquestionably

<sup>184</sup> Nowell Sketches, c.1564, Cotton MS Domitian [A] vxiii, f.120r, BL.

moved to the north and no longer covered or protected the extremities of the ness from direct wave action from the sea.<sup>185</sup>

In 1585 a coastal chart of the Norfolk and Suffolk coastline was published for the first time in Lucas Janz Waghenaer's 'Spieghel der zeevaerd' or Sea Mirror.<sup>186</sup> Drawn in a very clear style, visual navigational points on the coast include churches, beacons and houses, along with sandbanks and soundings. The coastline at Easton, which is depicted as if viewed from the sea, shows a higher cliff line in the south of the parish falling away to lower land to the north as Covehithe is approached. Buildings are shown on the sand at Covehithe which correlates with the idea that a 'shared' maritime community had developed near the haven away from the original settlements of Northales and Easton Bavents. In line with Poulter's chart discussed above, the Barnard sandbank, with depth soundings given in the area between it and the land, is shown as lying off Covehithe and not protecting Easton Ness.<sup>187</sup>

If these maps are accurate in depicting this northward shift of the Barnard sandbank then it is a morphological development of considerable significance because it would have left the ness exposed directly to the full force of the sea and increased its vulnerability to erosion. It would also have affected accessibility to the haven, mere and to the Easton river as shingle and sand deposits from the eroding ness and moving sandbank would have caused accretion to occur, resulting in the blocked feature shown by Saxton on his map of 1575. The importance of offshore sandbanks in protecting the sandy cliffs of East Anglia from sea surges is well established although the reason for their movement is varied.<sup>188</sup> Furthermore, major changes to the coastline occur through severe storms and such events were recorded affecting

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<sup>185</sup> Chart of the coast of Suffolk and Norfolk, 1539-40, Cotton Aug I i 58, BL.

<sup>186</sup> It is acknowledged that the 4th Dutch edition of this map was accessible to Spanish pilots surveying the English coastline in October 1597 as part of the Anglo-Spanish war. A survey produced does not detail the coastline at Easton. Aldeburgh and Kirkley Roads are described, see Albert J. Loomte, 'An Armada Pilot's Survey of the English Coastline, October 1597', *The Mariner's Mirror* 49, no. 4 (1963): 288, 299.

<sup>187</sup> It must be noted that this chart does include glaring errors in the labelling of place-names including at Dunwich and Southwold and the churches shown on the coastline. There is further discussion re this chart in Chapter 8. "Spieghel Der Zeevaerd" by Waghenaer, Special Collections', Utrecht University, accessed 26 August 2023, <https://www.uu.nl/en/special-collections/the-treasury/maps-and-atlases/spieghel-der-zeevaerd-by-waghenaer>, see 1585 editions, pg 125.

<sup>188</sup> Sear et al., '5883 Dunwich, Suffolk: Mapping and Assessing the Inundated Medieval Town', 8, 90, 102, 105; H. Muir Evans, 'The Sandbanks of Yarmouth and Lowestoft', *The Mariner's Mirror* XV, no. 3 (1929): 251-70; Karen Thurston, 'Morphological Evolution of Nearshore Sand Banks: The Great Yarmouth Banks, UK' (PhD, Norwich, University of East Anglia, 2011).

the east coast, in spring 1547, 1552/3, 1570 and again in 1588.<sup>189</sup> Examples of the local after effects of 1547 were recorded in the November of that year when church plate was sold and the proceeds were used at Easton for the repair of their quay and the safeguarding of their marshes, at Northales for the making of their quay and at Southwold for the walling up of their marsh and charges of the bulwarks at the haven.<sup>190</sup> Further evidence can be found in a Southwold chantry certificate which laments that 'the sea lyeth beating to the great Ruyne and distruction of the seid Towne yf that the power and violence of the same werr not broken by the maintenance of the Jetteis and peyres thear'.<sup>191</sup> The sea surges which occur during severe storms would have the force to cause shifting of the sandbanks. There is also evidence that the movement of the Barnard sandbank could have also been related to human intervention nearby because major work had been carried out between the 1540s and the 1550s to the harbour at Great Yarmouth, strengthening its defences with bulwarks, and cutting the shingle bank and river channel to aid easier access.<sup>192</sup> Likewise to the south, between Southwold and Dunwich, from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century through to 1590, a series of cuts had been made through the shingle bank separating the Dunwich spur of the Blyth river from the sea to try and keep the port of Dunwich accessible, altering the natural course of the river and its outlet to the sea.<sup>193</sup> Both alterations would have affected the natural flow of currents potentially impacting on the coastline to the north and south.

The detail and precision of charts and maps of the coastline improved during the course of the sixteenth century. Those discussed above are consistent in emphasising the prominence of Easton Ness as a navigational aid and topographical feature, which compromised cliffs on its southern side yet lower land on the northern side; in identifying the presence of a sizeable sandbank, the Barnard bank, off the ness, which migrated northwards during the second half of the century and in doing

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<sup>189</sup> Hubert Lamb and Knud Frydendahl, *Historic Storms of the North Sea, British Isles and Northwest Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 38–44; Sear, 'Southern East Coast North Sea Storms Database'; Adriaan M. J. De Kraker, 'Flood Events in the Southwestern Netherlands and Coastal Belgium, 1400-1953', *Hydrological Sciences Journal* 51, no. 5 (2010): 918–19.

<sup>190</sup> Sale of church goods, 1547, E315/510, f.57r, 119r and 142r, TNA.

<sup>191</sup> Transcription of certificate supplied by David Dymond. Southwold Chantry Certificate, 1548, E301/45, TNA.

<sup>192</sup> Michell, 'Port and Town of Great Yarmouth'; Williams, *Maritime Trade, 1550-1590*, 246–55. See also, P D A Harvey, *Maps in Tudor England* (London: British Library and the Public Record Office, 1993), 19, see map showing embankment and work at Yarmouth, 1566.

<sup>193</sup> Robert Wake, *Southwold and Its Vicinity Ancient and Modern* (Yarmouth: F. Skill, 1839), 249; Bottomley, *A Short History*, 3, 7; Ernest Read Cooper, *A Brief History of Southwold Haven* (Southwold: Southwold Press, 1907), v.

so ceased to protect the foot of the ness against the full action of the sea; and finally, in failing to record the presence of a haven at Easton and in suggesting the presence of a sizeable body of water behind a shingle bar between Easton and Covehithe, which must have been the former tidal river. In addition, there is clear evidence for a succession of storms on the East Anglian coast at this time, and major works in dredging the river mouth at Yarmouth. Thus, in all probability, the rate of erosion of Easton Ness increased dramatically during the second and third quarters of the sixteenth century. With low lying land on its northern side, the ness would have been exposed to flooding and the washing away of shingle and sand, and the sandy cliffs on its southern side would have been highly prone to erosion by the force of the sea. The debris from both would have exacerbated the silting up and sealing off of the haven. This sequence of events is also indicated by the vivid description in 1586 by William Camden in his 'Britannia' which states that 'Heere the Promontory of Easton-Nesse shooteth out, and reacheth farre into the east' and 'Upon the point of this Promontory standeth Easton a Village of Fishermen well neere eaten up by the Sea'.<sup>194</sup>

### Maps of the neighbouring coastline, 1580-1613

Between 1580 and 1613, four hand drawn, highly detailed and localised maps delineate parts of the coastline at Kessingland, Benacre, Covehithe and Southwold although no map detailing the coastline of Easton Bavents has survived for this period.<sup>195</sup> These maps were commissioned for differing reasons by different people, including for recording manorial land changes and for defence purposes but each one clearly shows sections of the coastline at a specific date. Topographical elements from each map will now be discussed in relation to the above findings regarding Easton Bavents.

The 1613 map of the East Field at Kessingland, drawn up to record the purchase of extra manorial land, illustrates in startling detail the brutal nature of coastal erosion on the cliff edge at Kessingland, just three miles to the north of Easton (Figure 11).

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<sup>194</sup> Camden, *Britannia*, 467.

<sup>195</sup> Plan of East Field, Kessingland, 1613, Add MS 42097, BL; A Platte of the manor of Benacre, 1580, T631/14 (uncatalogued collection), SA; Map of the manor of Northales, 1605, NRA 17140 Russell Box793, BA (described as mutilated on the brief box listing of an uncatalogued collection, there is no record of this map being discussed before); Plotte of Southold [Southwold], 1588, MPF 1/138, TNA.

Figure 11 – Section of the plan of East Field, Kessingland, 1613



Source – Plan of the East Field, Kessingland, Add MS 42097, BL

Strips of land are shown truncated where arable land has been lost to the sea along with obvious field boundaries. Access paths have also been lost, leading now only to the cliff edge. No houses nor evidence of habitation on the cliff in the East Field area is evident. The fishing community at Kessingland would have been located further south on lower land towards the harbour and the Hundred river, with other houses located approximately one mile inland lining the roads leading to Lowestoft and Beccles. Fishing as an occupation was still in evidence as small longshore handlining boats and larger vessels are depicted fishing off the coast. Land and paths were being lost in a similar fashion at Easton but here property was also recorded as being lost to erosion.

A map of the manor of Benacre, drawn up in 1580 to record the change of ownership, also evidences the continuation of strip farming in the area but provides no evidence of maritime activity adjacent to the coastline nor any illustration of sea fishing being carried on from the village (Figure 12, section from the plan). At Benacre, the main area of habitation, including the church, is shown a mile or so inland from the coastline.

**Figure 12 – Section of the platte of Benacre manor showing the ‘Lords fishing water and sandes’, 1580**



Source – ‘A platte of the Manor of Benacre’, 1580, T/631(14), SA.

The land adjacent to the sea is described as ‘warren and several of the Lord’ (being in the occupation of the manorial Lord), along with areas of low-lying sea marsh, common land and an area of water. This area of water is separated from the sea by sand and described as ‘the Lords Fishing water’, although it does have a small channel of water open to the seashore and it is this water which is today known as Benacre Broad.<sup>196</sup> It is worth noting that the term ‘haven’ is also used on this map, at this date, to describe the channel of water lying within the confines of the Hundred river and not an area of sheltered water lying off the coast. This strengthens the argument that the haven described in the 1531 survey, as between Easton and Covehithe, was lying within the confines of the Easton river and not a sheltered area on the coastline.<sup>197</sup>

A map of the manor of Northales (located in Covehithe) drawn up in 1605 is described as ‘mutilated’. It records a change in manorial ownership and has the lower right-hand section adjoining the manor of Easton Bavents missing (paper has been torn off at a

<sup>196</sup> An overlay using GIS of the 1580 map with a 6in OS map of Benacre by Jon Gregory UEA places the broad at exactly the same coordinates.

<sup>197</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531.

fold line).<sup>198</sup> The map is also in poor condition on the right-hand coastal edge with loss of paper and wording meaning vital information has regrettably been lost (Figure 13 (a) section from the map).

**Figure 13 (a) – Section of the map of the manor of Northales showing the mutilated area and ‘tadpole’ area of water at the southern extremity, 1605**



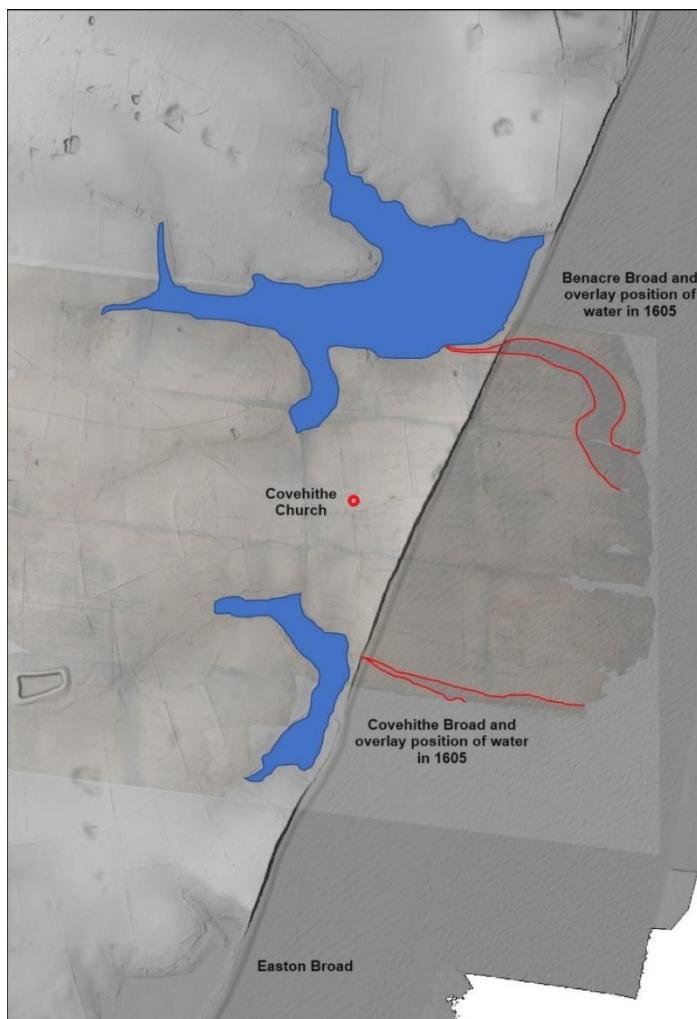
Source - Map of the manor of Northales, 1605, NRA 17140 Russell Box793, Bedfordshire Archives

The area of water described on the Benacre map as the ‘Lords Fishing water’ is shown at the northern, top right corner of the manor at the boundary between Covehithe and Benacre and is bounded to the southwest by ‘the common of Covehithe’. Another area of water is shown at the far southern boundary with Easton Bavents although its full extent and shape cannot be ascertained as the map is missing the lower section. This is the area of water shown in Saxtons 1575 map of Suffolk as the ‘tadpole’ shape and discussed above as water which flooded the Easton river valley and the Covehithe spur, held behind a barrier of shingle and sand. An area directly to the north of this water is described as South End close and South End meadow. In 1536, at the South yard of Covehythe, as part of an Admiralty Court hearing regarding wreck rights, two ‘wapes’ or warropes were found ‘floating upon the see’ in this area, linking it to the building of vessels and a time when access to the water could be gained from the sea. Also lying to the south of the map a few trees can be seen (later to be known as Easton Wood), although the view of the greater part of this wood has been lost due to the missing section.

<sup>198</sup> The National Archives, ‘Northales Manor’, The Manorial Documents Register (The National Archives), accessed 19 July 2024, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/c/F250220>.

A geo-rectifying of the Northales map against a 2020 LiDAR Digital surface model (using Covehithe church as a set point) provides evidence of the extent of the loss of land over 400 years and the alignment of the both the 'Lords Water' at Benacre and that at Covehithe which were all potentially part of the wider original Easton estuary area, (Figure 13 (b)).

**Figure 13 (b) – 2020 Lidar image of Benacre and Covehithe coast with map of the manor of Northales, 1605, overlaid**



Source – 'Potters Bridge Area Lidar, TM5079', ARCHI UK, accessed 21 July 2021, <https://www.archiuk.com/>; Map of the manor of Northales, 1605; Geo-rectified image supplied by Professor David Sear, 2023

In 1588 two maps of Southwold were drawn up as part of a survey of the coastline for defence purposes when the Armada threat from Spain was imminent. Both maps concentrate on the town of Southwold as an area which required defences to prevent

the threat of invasion.<sup>199</sup> One plan, attributed to the local surveyor John Darby and held within the state papers at TNA, has the coastline at Southwold leading to Easton clearly delineated (Figure 14).

**Figure 14 – Plotte of Southwold showing Woods End creek and de Bavent armorial shield, 1588.**



Source - Plotte of Southold [Southwold], 1588, (attributed to John Darby)<sup>200</sup> MPF 1/138, TNA

It does not show the populated area of Easton Bavents but the boundary between the two parishes, a spur from the Blyth river which stretches round behind Southwold, and a shield depicting the de Bavent manorial device of 'argent chief indented sable', are shown. The spur, known as Woods End Creek at this date, does not empty into the sea and a small area of beach is shown with the change from low lying sand to higher cliff clearly depicted.<sup>201</sup> The coastal contours of this plan mirror those shown on Saxtons map of 1575 strengthening the case that this delineation of the coastline

<sup>199</sup> The other plan is held as part of the Cecil Papers. Plan of Southwold, July 1588, CP 142/98, Hatfield House Archives.

<sup>200</sup> A doctorate on the life of Darby is currently being undertaken by Vivienne Aldous, University of Suffolk, Ipswich and University of East Anglia (History). [2024]. Working title: 'The Life, Work and Influence of John Darby (c.1553-1608/9), Surveyor, Map-Maker, Artist, Protestant and Social Climber'. 'Doctorates in Progress in the History of Cartography', History of Cartography, accessed 20 July 2024, <https://www.maphistory.info/futurephd.html>.

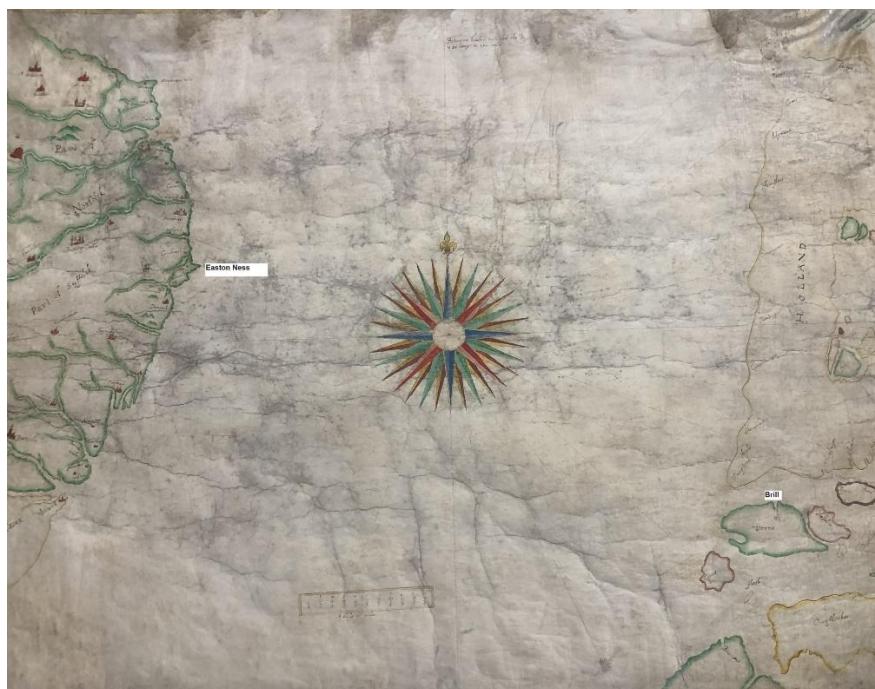
<sup>201</sup> The spur is so named on a map published by Gardner which was drawn by J Kirby from a now lost plan of Ralph Agas dated 1587. Gardner, *An Historical Account of Dunwich*, end piece.

can be relied upon as it was being surveyed to provide evidence against invasion and would be required to show vulnerable low-lying areas of sand.

### **Coastal chart of East Anglia and Holland**

Within the borough of Great Yarmouth's archive collection is an un-dated plan with a catalogue description given as 'Chart showing the coast of East Anglia and the Dutch coast opposite', along with a tentative date of late 16<sup>th</sup> century, early 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>202</sup> It is a physically large chart (28.5 x 21.5 inches) on vellum, with a detailed compass rose and scale bar (Figure 15).

**Figure 15 – Chart of the coast of East Anglia and Holland, tentatively dated between 1575-1612**



Note – Positions of Easton Ness and Brill highlighted

Source - Chart showing the coast of East Anglia and the Dutch coast opposite, n.d. (late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century), Y/C 37/2, NRO

The chart is delineated so that Easton Ness sits at the centre of the coastline of East Anglia and annotations at the top (in a contemporary hand to the chart) tell us that 'between Easton Nesse and the Brill is 34 leagues or 102 miles'. The Brill or Briell was one of three strategic ports held as 'Cautionary Towns' by the English, under the

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<sup>202</sup> Chart showing the coast of East Anglia and the Dutch coast opposite, n.d. (late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century), Y/C 37/2, NRO.

Treaty of Nonsuch in 1585, to provide security for assistance provided by Elizabeth I in the Eighty Years war against Spain. In the August of 1585 Great Yarmouth delivered 400 men, levied into service from Norfolk and Suffolk to Zeeland and to the Brill and by 1588-89 there was a large army presence in the Netherlands which required victualling and large quantities of corn were shipped from Norfolk to Amsterdam and to the Brill.<sup>203</sup> The chart is listed in a 1612 inventory of maps and plans within the borough of Great Yarmouth's records and leads to the reasonable conclusion that it related to the transport of men and goods from Great Yarmouth to the United Provinces of Holland between 1585 and the close of the sixteenth century.<sup>204</sup>

In 1608, a new Yarmouth charter of incorporation, granted by letters patent of James I, extended its admiralty jurisdiction of coastline and waters from Winterton-Ness (Norfolk) to Easton Ness. Previously Kirkley Roads had been the southern extent of Great Yarmouth admiralty control.<sup>205</sup> This led to a series of litigation and disputes, which lasted for over a hundred years, between Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth fighting over port status and admiralty rights and highlights the significance of the ness at Easton in the maritime affairs of both Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft at the start of the seventeenth century.<sup>206</sup> Visually, the chart also clearly displays the geographical closeness of Easton to the Low Countries and the Netherlands and the spatial relationship of the ness and its prominence as a coastline marker for mariners .

## Conclusion

The evidence from a variety of pre-1600 defence charts, navigational aids and maps can be deployed to allow a reconstruction of the evolution of the coastline at Easton Bavents.

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<sup>203</sup> Two bailiffs of Great Yarmouth requested £347 for the charges involved of embarking 400 soldiers of Norfolk and Suffolk at Yarmouth bound for Holland. Robert Lemon, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, Series, Elizabeth* (London: Longman Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1865), 264 (entry 76); Williams, *Maritime Trade, 1550-1590*, 79.

<sup>204</sup> An inventory/report dated 7<sup>th</sup> July 1612 states 'A paper card with part of Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk on thone syde and Holland on the other syde'. Further on in the report it states, 'the said paper card in vellum'. This would indicate both a paper and vellum copy of the chart. Thanks to Viv Aldous for this reference. Manship's Report, Y/C 1/1 fol.23r & 23v, NRO.

<sup>205</sup> Letters Patent of James I, 22 July 1608, Y/C 2/12, NRO.

<sup>206</sup> David Butcher, 'The Lothingland-Great Yarmouth Disputes: Part 1, "All Because of the Herring"', *Suffolk Review* Spring 2020, no. New Series 74 (2020): 7-15.

At the time of the Roman occupation of Britain in the second century, a large promontory located in this area of the Suffolk coast was of enough strategic importance to be included by Ptolemy in his mapping exercise and was possibly the converging point for a number of Roman roads. Domesday provided evidence of a port at Frostenden accessed through the Easton river which reached the sea between Northales and Easton. By c.1200 it was evident that the promontory or ness at Kirkley was of importance to coastal navigators. A body of water called the Southmere, now existed between Northales (Covehithe) and Easton which was clearly associated with the silting of the Easton river, the decline of the port at Frostenden, and the emergence of salt marshes and tidal creeks. A sandbank was recorded lying just off the land in the vicinity of Easton. Late fourteenth century evidence points to the continuation of the importance of Kirkley to mariners navigating the coastline but by this date the Easton river had again become accessible to vessels from the sea, spawning maritime settlements near its mouth, one on the southern side around a market at Easton and the other at the new settlement of Covehithe. The storm surges which obliterated Dunwich between the 1280s and the 1340s also altered the topography of the coastline around Easton perhaps creating an accessible haven.

The sandbank recorded in the late twelfth century lying off Easton was still evident in the late fifteenth century and by 1539, the first recorded date of Easton being named on a map or chart, it was known by the name of the Barnard sand and protected the soft geology of Easton Ness from the sea. Kirkley Ness had lost its importance and now Easton Ness featured prominently in the work of surveyors and cartographers. Maps of the 1570s and 1580s provide greater detail about the coastline and are consistent in not depicting a haven at Easton but instead reveal the existence of a 'tadpole' shaped body of water behind a sealed bar. This must indicate the remnants of the former haven following the permanent blocking of the Easton river by sand and shingle in the vicinity of where Southmere was recorded in 1236. The Barnard sandbank had moved northwards away from Easton Ness to lie off Covehithe, which would have accelerated the rate of erosion of the ness and vastly increased the amount of material available for deposition close by. The shift in the sandbank, the erosion of the ness and the blocking of the haven were linked to a succession of violent storms across the middle of the sixteenth century and occurred over a period of time, starting from c.1537 and increasing exponentially from the midpoint of the century. By 1575 and 1584 the dramatic consequences were visually evident and recorded by the cartographers. The accessible sea haven at Easton was no longer in existence and instead the Easton river had become landlocked with a large area of

the surrounding low-lying land in the valley becoming a flooded mere and salt marsh. The ness was eroding from both its north and south sides and becoming greatly diminished.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Demographic changes, taxation wealth and immigration figures, 1086-1603**

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapters have chronicled the topography of Easton Bavents and the effect of topographical changes due to flooding, accretion and erosion, especially relating to the haven and the ness from Domesday to the dawn of the seventeenth century. The reconstruction of the coastal changes can now be correlated with other evidence from very different sources for demographic change, taxation wealth and immigration figures, over time: does the chronology of the nature of coastal change fit with what can be reconstructed of the economy and community of Easton?

Analyses of population fluctuations and taxable wealth within a community over time are essential elements in reconstructing and assessing its changing fortunes. These changes could occur for a myriad of reasons including fluctuating birth and death rates, with immigration or emigration and in wider economic and topographical forces. Kowaleski has noted that 'previous studies of late medieval population have often focused on national trends, but this emphasis tends to neglect the local variety of which national trends are the net outcome'.<sup>207</sup> By focusing on the changes at Easton Bavents and comparing its fortunes over time with those of its near neighbours specific 'trends' evident in these small, east coast, maritime communities will emerge and can be discussed in relation to national trends. Kowaleski also notes that 'peculiar demographic characteristics of maritime communities...(are) distinguished by the adaptations they made to the challenges posed by the marine environment'.<sup>208</sup> As a maritime community, Easton Bavents faced the specific additional challenges of coastal erosion, inundations by the sea and freshwater flooding, along with sedimentation and the blocking of its haven and waterways. An analysis of the chronology of changes in population figures and taxable wealth over five centuries will provide a framework for understanding the complex coastal changes and the fortunes of this specific local community.

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<sup>207</sup> Kowaleski, 'Demography of Maritime Communities', 87.

<sup>208</sup> Kowaleski, 87.

## Demographic changes, 1086-1327

With no definitive demographic data, the broad changes in the local populations have been crudely estimated from four key, yet very different sources: the Domesday listing of 1086, Lay Subsidy returns for 1327 and 1524, and an ecclesiastical return of 1603. None of these returns were originally compiled to provide a record of the population count, but they represent the best raw headcounts of people within a community at a given time. While the raw figures need to be treated with caution, they can be subjected to assumptions about omissions and multipliers to calculate a crude estimate of the date of each source. There are differing opinions between scholars as to the validity of the various multipliers deployed to reconstruct total population figures from the numbers listed and in the case of the tax returns, from those who were liable.<sup>209</sup> The multipliers suggested by Goose and Hinde for differing assessments represent the current balance of scholarly opinion and so have been used here for the figures from 1086, 1524 and 1603. Multipliers cited by Bailey in his work on medieval Suffolk have been used for the 1327 figures.<sup>210</sup> These crude figures will be used alongside other information relating to population figures and wealth to create a broad sense of growth and decline over a period of 500 years.

Domesday, provides the earliest basis for estimating the population of the local settlements in the vicinity of Easton Bavents, especially as the Little Domesday covering Norfolk and Suffolk is more detailed than most other Domesday returns.<sup>211</sup> Land in Easton Bavents or Estuna as it is recorded in Domesday, was held in 1086 by the King and by Gilbert the Crossbowman, a tenant in chief.<sup>212</sup> The larger of the holdings was that of Gilbert the Crossbowman who had other land at Chediston and at Uggeshall in Blything hundred and at Gislingham in Hartismere hundred. The Easton holding of the King has been listed in Domesday under Hartismere hundred, however this may potentially be a transcription error on the part of the Domesday scribe as it is recorded (along with an entry for Gislingham) in the line immediately above the start of the King's listings for Blything hundred.<sup>213</sup> Easton's population is composed of 3 villeins, 5 bordars, 1 slave and 2 freemen listed under the holdings of Gilbert the crossbowman and a further 2 villeins under the holdings of the King: and

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<sup>209</sup> Goose and Hinde, 'Estimating Local Population: Part I', 71.

<sup>210</sup> Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, 1:67.

<sup>211</sup> Goose and Hinde, 'Estimating Local Population: Part II', 75.

<sup>212</sup> There is no nominal suffix added to Estuna at this date. The entry is generally recognised to be Easton Bavents as it is the only vill named Easton in the Blything hundred.

<sup>213</sup> No known link between Easton Bavents and Gislingham, except see fn. 214 below.

for the purpose of estimating the population count in 1086, it is assumed that Gilbert the Crossbowman was non-resident.<sup>214</sup>

Goose and Hinde provide a rationale for the multipliers used in estimating the Domesday population, synthesised from listed studies.<sup>215</sup> The listings of 'peasants' in the survey, generally called, villeins, bordars and freemen are generally accepted as the 'household' head. The listing of slaves within Domesday is not clear as to whether it accounted for a single person or a household head. For this study it has been assumed that the slave listing was as a household head. Therefore, a multiplier of 4.5 has been applied to the household head figure along with an allowance of 10% for undercounting which results in an estimate of the population for Easton of 64 persons (**Table 2**).

The Domesday survey, in 1086, records just over 19,000 landholders, with 45% comprising of freemen or sokeman and with villeins and bordars making up 50%.<sup>216</sup> Easton did not conform to this trend with freemen comprising only 14% and villeins and bordars totalling 72%. Kessingland, Northales, South Cove, and Reydon all returned listings of over 50% of their population being freemen. Southwold, which was listed in Domesday as a manor held by the Abbey of St Edmunds for the supplies of the monks, recorded no freemen, only 5 villeins and 4 bordars. Benacre, another holding of the Abbey of St Edmunds returned only one sokeman holding ten acres of land.<sup>217</sup>

Over the course of the following two hundred years estimates of the English population suggest an increase of 175% between 1086 and 1315, with the fastest growth occurring in the periods 1190-1220 (83% increase) and 1279-1290 (65% increase).<sup>218</sup> These estimates have been derived from data on population trends

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<sup>214</sup> Gilbert the Crossbowman or Arbalistarius held lands in Uggeshall, Chediston and Gislingham as well as lands in Norwich, Norfolk. Williams and Martin, *Little Domesday Book*, 282, 444; Dr K.S.B. Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People, A Prosopography of Persons Occurring in English Documents 1066-1166*, vol. 1 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999), 208.

<sup>215</sup> J.C. Russell, *British Medieval Population* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1948); H.C. Darby, *The Domesday Geography of Eastern England*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 88; S. Harvey, 'Domesday England', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Vol II, 1042-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 45-136; Goose and Hinde, 'Estimating Local Population: Part II', 76.

<sup>216</sup> See Appendix 1: Summary for Eastern England, A. Total figures and B. Percentages, in Darby, *Domesday Geography*, 379; A total Suffolk population of around 100,000 is suggested in Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, 1:67.

<sup>217</sup> Williams and Martin, *Little Domesday Book: Suffolk. Introduction Translation and Indexes*, 371v.

<sup>218</sup> See Table 4: English population trends, 1086-1450. Stephen Broadberry, Bruce M.S. Campbell, and Bas van Leeuwen, 'English Medieval Population: Reconciling Time Series and Cross Sectional Evidence',

extracted from manorial records, including some Suffolk manors. There are no population figures available to understand if Easton mirrored these surges of rapid growth rates as the early manorial data for the 13<sup>th</sup> century has not been transcribed.<sup>219</sup>

### **Demographic changes, 1327-1524**

In 1327 Edward III summoned a parliament to raise a levy to enable him to continue the ongoing war with Scotland. Where they have survived, the written returns for this levy provide detailed lists of the names of the men and women who were liable to pay within each vill.<sup>220</sup> In this subsidy return the listing for the vill of 'Estone' is combined with that for the neighbouring vill of 'Reydone'.<sup>221</sup> Warner suggests vills are clustered together into 'letes' for the purpose of paying taxes.<sup>222</sup> In 1327 the tax was paid by 55 inhabitants of Reydon and Easton on their moveable goods (rents, crops, cattle, stock in trade, money etc) worth over the value of 10s. Each was taxed a twentieth of the value of their goods which would provide a rough value of the moveable goods for the combined vills of £4 14s. Within the published transcript, names are recorded in a continuous list under the combined vill heading and there is no obvious break in the text to denote which names related to the vill of Easton and which to Reydon. However nominal linkages can be used for the combined listings to identify those specifically resident of Easton. Thomas de Bawent was one, the holder of the manor of Easton from c.1321 and granted a market and fair charter for Easton in 1330.<sup>223</sup> Thomas de Bawent was listed as paying 5s, the highest amount, along with Geoffrey de Cove, listed next, who paid the same, and was described as 'of Easton' in a deed from 1325.<sup>224</sup> Further nominal linkages can be reliably witnessed with land holdings recorded in both the fourteenth and sixteenth century manorial records. Holdings

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Reconstructing the National Income of Britain and Holland, c.1270/1500 to 1850 (Leverhulme Trust, 2010), 18.

<sup>219</sup> The known extant manorial records for Easton Bawents commence in 1275, see Appendix 2.

<sup>220</sup> An individual assessment for the twentieth granted to Edward III for Suffolk, E179/180/6, TNA. Published in Hervey, *Suffolk 1327*.

<sup>221</sup> The vill of Easton or Estone in Blything Hundred has not been given its suffix of Bawent at this date. Hervey, II:74.

<sup>222</sup> Warner links Reydon (with Wangford), Southwold and Easton Bawents. Peter Warner, *The Origins of Suffolk, Origins of the Shire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 160–63.

<sup>223</sup> Copinger, *Manors of Suffolk, Blything*, 2:63; Maxwell-Lyte, *Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1-14 Edward III, 1327-1341*, 353.

<sup>224</sup> Walter Rye, *A Calendar of the Feet of Fines For Suffolk* (Ipswich: Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History, 1900).

called Clubbards, Goldenacre and Gosemere are recorded at Easton Bavents which link with William Clubbard, William Golde and William de Gosemere all listed in 1327. Likewise, the names of Lump, Parmenter and Gamell are recorded in a manorial survey at Easton as well as in 1327.<sup>225</sup> All of these names occurred in the last 17 names listed in the survey, recorded after that of Thomas de Bavent. It is therefore a reasonable supposition that the last 18 names on the list are those for the inhabitants of Easton.

This supposition is strengthened when the returns for the later Lay Subsidy of 1334 are examined. The returns of 1334 list Easton and Reydon separately with a total of the subsidy paid by each vill. No individual names or population figures are provided.<sup>226</sup> Easton is assessed on a total due of £1 16s 8d and Reydon £4 13s 0d. The Easton figure is approximately 29% of the total due for the combined vills. If this rationale is applied to the returns of seven years earlier in 1327 it would equate that the Easton population figure then, was approximately 29% of the total of 55. A figure of 16 taxpayers is very close to the 18 we have identified as above.

Bailey acknowledges the difficulties in estimating medieval population levels from Lay Subsidy returns but drawing on the work of other scholars he uses crude multipliers of 15 (lower) and 19 (higher) to convert taxpayers in 1327 to a minimum and maximum population figure. A mid-point multiplier of 17 is used here.<sup>227</sup> This provides a crude population count for Easton in 1327 of 306. See **Table 2** for a comparison with the Domesday figure which sees an estimated 378% rise in the population at Easton which far outstrips the national 175% increase at 1315, as noted above and exceeds the eastern grouping totals discussed by Hallam.<sup>228</sup> Northales returns a potential 2,918% increase in its population, far outstripping both national and regional trends

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<sup>225</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531.

<sup>226</sup> Robin E. Glasscock, *The Lay Subsidy of 1334*, Records of Social and Economic History: New Series 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 289.

<sup>227</sup> Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, 1:67, citing ; E. Campbell, 'Domesday Suffolk', in *The Domesday Geography of Eastern England*, 1952, 169; David Dymond and Peter Northeast, *A History of Suffolk* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1995), 42–43; H. E. Hallam, ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume II, 1042-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 140, 542; Ray Lock, 'The Black Death in Walsham-Le-Willows', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* 37 (1992): 328.

<sup>228</sup> Hallam in his work on estimated population trends provides further data narrowed down by regional groupings. Nationally he estimates the population growth, from a base in 1086 to 1317, at 215% whilst in the Eastern grouping there is evidence of an even higher percentage of growth at 333.7%. The Eastern grouping comprises of Lincs, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Cambs. Caution should be exercised with the Suffolk data as no manorial data post 1250 was used and no coastal manors were examined. H.E. Hallam, ed., 'Population Movements in England, 1086-1350', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Vol II, 1042-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 591–93.

and is at this date recorded eighth in a rank order of Suffolk towns.<sup>229</sup> Benacre potentially witnesses a massive increase in its population by 1381 when population figures for the vill as a separate entity were recorded in the poll tax collected that year. Potentially 182 persons in 31 households were recorded and of these 14 were given as 'fisher' households, which Kowaleski notes, defines it as a maritime community.<sup>230</sup>

It is agreed that rises in the population of the twelfth and thirteenth century slowed in the early fourteenth century and then were dramatically reversed after the arrival of the Black Death in 1348-9.<sup>231</sup> The Black Death ripped through Suffolk from January to July 1349. At the head of an Easton manorial account for 1348-9 a scribe added the bald statement 'in which year the pestilence of men raged through England'.<sup>232</sup> The register recording the institution of priests in the diocese of Norwich recorded new appointments at Easton due to the death of the previous incumbent in both the May and June of 1349.<sup>233</sup> During the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the English population continued to be devastated by repeated epidemics and national estimates show no recovery from the losses of the Black Death. It was not until the early sixteenth century that there were the first signs of a recovery.<sup>234</sup>

During this period, it is challenging to attempt to assess the demographic trend in Easton Bavents and its surrounding communities. In 1428, a subsidy to fund the continuing war in France, was passed which levied taxes on parishes as opposed to townships. Parishes with fewer than ten households were exempt and listed but, Easton Bavents and the seven comparator parishes were not included on that exempted list indicating their populations were above the base figure of ten households.<sup>235</sup> The geographical distribution of these parishes with such small populations was a surprise to Dymond and Virgoe who stated that 'they were not numerous on the Breckland or Sandlings areas of light marginal land where the

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<sup>229</sup> Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, 1:128.

<sup>230</sup> Carolyn C. Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, vol. 2, Records of Social and Economic History. New Series: 29 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2001), 509–10; Kowaleski, 'Demography of Maritime Communities', 92.

<sup>231</sup> Broadberry, Campbell, and Leeuwen, 'English Medieval Population', 18.

<sup>232</sup> Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, 1:176.

<sup>233</sup> Phyllis E. Pobst, ed., *The Register of William Bateman, Bishop of Norwich, 1344-1355*, The Canterbury and York Society 84 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1996), 87, 97; In a single year these institutions rose from an average of 81 to 831, indicating the high death-rate amongst the clergy. William Page, ed., *The Victoria History of the County of Suffolk*, vol. 2 (London: Archibald Constable & Company Limited, 1907), 19.

<sup>234</sup> Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, 1:292–93.

<sup>235</sup> David Dymond and Roger Virgoe, 'The Reduced Population And Wealth Of Early Fifteenth-Century Suffolk', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* 36, no. 2 (1986): 73.

population undoubtedly declined'.<sup>236</sup> There were only two Suffolk coastal parishes out of seventy four parishes with under ten households listed; Gunton and South Town, both in Lothingland hundred to the north of Lowestoft.

### **Demographic changes, 1524-1603**

The Exchequer Lay Subsidy granted to Henry VIII, for four years, in 1523, and collected in 1524/1525 is recognised as the most comprehensive list amongst the sixteenth century tax listings. It has been cited by many historians undertaking similar demographic studies as an invaluable source for population figures.<sup>237</sup> The assessment was structured in a way to ensure that most men contributed regardless of how they earned their money. The subsidy was paid on either land holdings, goods or wages, whichever brought in the most income. Land was assessed at 12d in the pound, regardless of how much was held. Goods were assessed at 12d in the pound for those having £20 worth or more, reducing to 6d in the pound for those with £1-£20 worth of goods. Wages of £1 or more per annum were assessed at 4d and for those earning over £2 per annum, at 6d. Aliens or those immigrants not born in England were listed and taxed at double the rates above. A few widows and very rich single women were listed within the returns. Money held in poor boxes and vested in town lands was also assessed.<sup>238</sup> The validity of this subsidy to provide evidence of population distribution and wealth has also been discussed by Sheail with the conclusion that 'the survey provides a framework into which the mass of local evidence on the economy and society of Tudor England may be placed'.<sup>239</sup> General patterns of change can be discerned and where these are identified subsequent research into more localised evidence can be placed into context.<sup>240</sup>

The Suffolk returns for 1524/5 have been published by Harvey, although the transcript is recognised as having drawbacks as in some places information was amalgamated from the returns for 1524 and 1525 where the returns were not complete for each

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<sup>236</sup> Dymond and Virgoe, 74.

<sup>237</sup> Butcher, *Medieval Lowestoft*; Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety, Terling, 1525-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001); Jane Whittle, *The Development of Agrarian Capitalism: Land and Labour in Norfolk, 1440-1580*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Goose and Hinde, 'Estimating Local Population: Part II'.

<sup>238</sup> Not included in the population count statistics.

<sup>239</sup> John Sheail, 'The Distribution of Taxable Population and Wealth in England during the Early Sixteenth Century', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, no. 55 (1972): 111.

<sup>240</sup> Sheail, 124.

year.<sup>241</sup> Consequently, the original return was accessed at TNA for the seven comparator communities which provides the basis of the raw figures used here.<sup>242</sup> Again, Goose and Hinde highlight the differing academic opinions as to the validity of multipliers used for this subsidy to reconstruct the population figure from the numbers listed.<sup>243</sup> This study follows the method recommended by Goose and Hinde where three adjustments have to be made to provide a household count and a combined percentage to account for those who evaded taxation or fell below the given threshold. A household multiplier of 4.5 and an allowance of a combined 30% undercount and under-represented figure converts the raw figure of 60 taxpayers into a crude population count for Easton Bavents in 1524 of either 378 (assuming the returns list only household heads) or 269 (assuming the returns list males over the age of 16).<sup>244</sup> A crude mean figure would give us an estimated population of around 324 people, an increase of 18 or 6% on the figure from 1327 (**Table 3**).

In 1524 the population of England as a whole, had not yet recovered to the pre-Black Death level of 1327 and was by most estimates less than half its pre-plague peak.<sup>245</sup> Bailey suggests that best estimates cite a 2.8 million population in England in the 1370s and around 2.3 million in the 1520s.<sup>246</sup> The period from the 1450s to the advent of parish registration in 1538 is very much a demographic Dark Age, where there is uncertainty about the trend or its main driver.<sup>247</sup> Against this backdrop it is interesting that Easton Bavents had witnessed a 6% increase in its population over that period. Easton Bavents was not alone as an even higher increase can be seen in those percentage increases for Southwold at 74%. For Kessingland, Covehithe, South Cove, Reydon and potentially Benacre, a significant population decrease has occurred. These percentage increases and decreases illustrate that communities on this section of the Suffolk coast were experiencing widely differing fortunes. Such differing experiences were reflected along the southern part of the Suffolk coastline

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<sup>241</sup> Sydenham Henry Augustus Hervey, *Suffolk in 1524, Being the Return for a Subsidy Granted in 1523*, Suffolk Green Books, X (Woodbridge: G. Booth, 1910), 85-87.

<sup>242</sup> All data for the Blything vills taken from document dated 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 1524. E179/180/171 rot 1, 6d and 8, TNA.

<sup>243</sup> Goose and Hinde, 79.

<sup>244</sup> Goose and Hinde, 79.

<sup>245</sup> John Patten, 'Population Distribution in Norfolk and Suffolk during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, no. 65 (1975): 45, <https://doi.org/10.2307/621609>.

<sup>246</sup> Mark Bailey, 'Demographic Decline in Late Medieval England: Some Thoughts on Recent Research', *Economic History Review* 49, no. 1 (1996): 1.

<sup>247</sup> Stephen Broadberry et al., *British Economic Growth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 16.

as noted by Bailey et. al. when discussing the changing morphology of the coastline during the period c.1200-c.1600 and the economic effect on its towns and villages.<sup>248</sup>

In June 1603 an ecclesiastical return was completed for the Diocese of Norwich, which included the county of Suffolk, in response to a request by Archbishop Whitgift.<sup>249</sup> One of the purposes of the return was to list the number of communicants within each parish. For Easton Bavents the return lists 46 communicants and Evelyn White, commenting on the 1888 transcript of the original document, states 'it is generally accepted that at this time communicants comprised the whole body of adult inhabitants of a parish'.<sup>250</sup> This is likely to be untrue and Dyer and Palliser, in 2005 argued that the idea the returns list all those attending church in a particular parish was a naïve one and they suggested an undercount should be allowed of 35%.<sup>251</sup> Goose and Hinde, quoting Dyer and Palliser, also suggested that due to the problems of establishing the age at which communion was taken a further undercount of 35% should be allowed for those under the age of 14.<sup>252</sup> Using the Goose and Hinde formula for omissions and household multipliers the raw figure of 46 souls for Easton Bavents converts to an estimated population count of 109 in 1603, a decrease of 67% from the 330 persons calculated for 1524. As the population of England nearly doubled in size between 1541 to 1656, from an estimated 2.774 million to 5.281 million, Easton's dramatic decline was again bucking the national trend (**Table 4**).<sup>253</sup>

There were no returns listed for Southwold and Reydon in 1603 as both parishes were rife with the plague at the date of the return. For Easton Bavents it was recorded that "they have no pson (parson)", an unusual entry which does not appear within the transcript for any other of the Suffolk parishes. In 1603, parish register entries for Southwold, Covehithe and Lowestoft all record a very high death rate attributed to plague, and this is discussed more fully in Chapter 8. As **Table 4** reveals, Kessingland had experienced a sizable decrease in its estimated population whilst Benacre and Covehithe were experiencing smaller decreases. Dyer and Palliser highlight the problem of the rounding up or down of numbers within the count, pointing to multiples

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<sup>248</sup> Bailey, Wain, and Sear, 'The Transformation of the Suffolk Coast'.

<sup>249</sup> The original document is held at the British Library. Returns of the Diocese of Norwich, 1603, Harley 595 ii f.169, BL.

<sup>250</sup> C. H. Evelyn White and Francis Haslewood, eds., 'The Condition of the Archdeaconries of Suffolk and Sudbury in the Year 1603', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* VI, no. 3 (1888): 361.

<sup>251</sup> Alan Dyer and D. M. Palliser, eds., *The Diocesan Population Returns For 1563 and 1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>252</sup> Goose and Hinde, 'Estimating Local Population: Part II', 82.

<sup>253</sup> Wrigley and Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871*, 210.

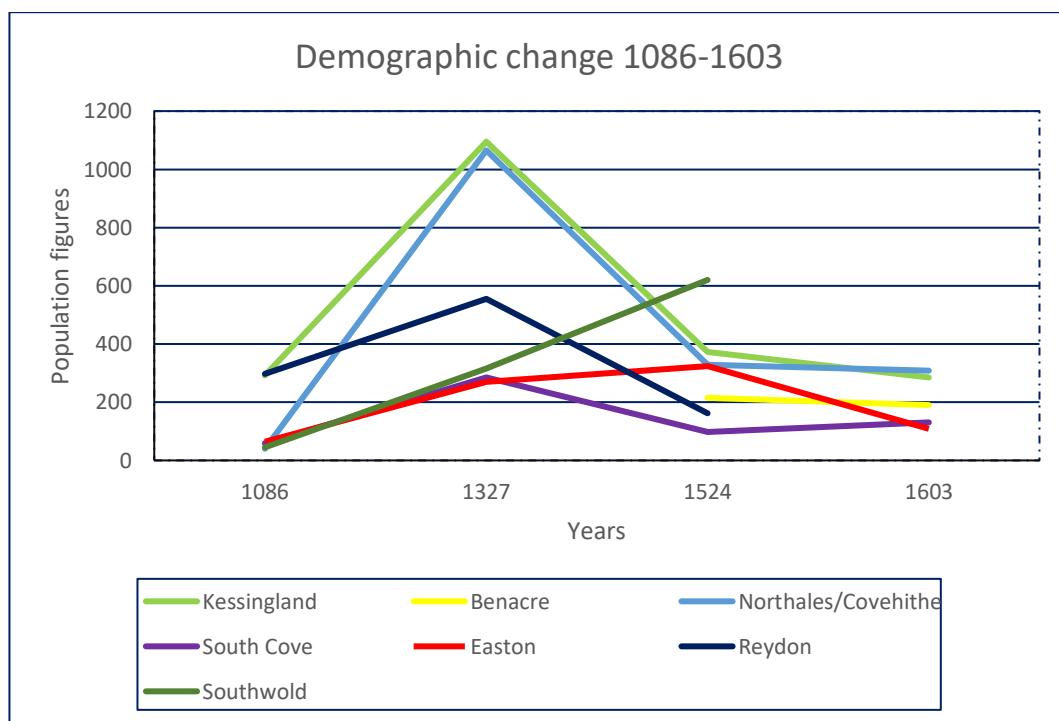
of ten and twenty being present in large quantities.<sup>254</sup> For the 45 parishes comprising the deanery of Dunwich in which 6 of the 7 comparator parishes can be found, the returns list 53% of them as multiples of ten and 40% of them as multiples of twenty.<sup>255</sup> The listings for Benacre, Kessingland and Covehithe are all exact multiples of ten and therefore should be treated with some caution.

### Summary of demographic trends, 1086-1603

What do these crude population estimates, plotted over time indicate for the communities of Easton Bavents and its near neighbours on the north-east Suffolk coast?

Easton, in comparison with Northales, South Cove and Southwold all returned similar estimated population totals at the time of the Domesday survey (Figure 16).

Figure 16 – Graph of estimated demographic change, 1086-1603



Note – Comparison figures are not available for Benacre in 1327 and Southwold and Reydon in 1603.

Source – See Tables 2-4 for estimated population figures.

<sup>254</sup> Dyer and Palliser, *Diocesan Population Returns*.

<sup>255</sup> Dyer and Palliser, 422.

Between 1086 and 1327, a period of great demographic increase in England, the population of Easton Bavents rose significantly, and it is clearly evident that by 1327 Northales and Kessingland, out of the vills being investigated, had by far the highest taxable population. Benacre potentially had also experienced a substantial increase in its population. Over the course of the next two hundred years this situation subtly altered, with Easton expanding in contrast to national population trends which showed a decline due to the ravage of plague. It is fair to suggest that the population of Easton Bavents was at its zenith around 1490-1500. In 1524, Covehithe, not now referred to as Northales, returned a similar number of the population liable for the lay subsidy as Easton but, this was a decline from its figure for 1327. Southwold, now a borough and growing as an urban area had overtaken both and was the preeminent community on this section of the coast. Kessingland, South Cove and Reydon, who all saw increases in their population between 1086 and 1327, all experienced a decline by 1524.

Easton bucked national trends again between 1524 and 1604 but this time it experienced a catastrophic decline in its population. With no 1603 figures available for Reydon and Southwold it is impossible to draw any comparisons with its near neighbours to the south and west. Of the fortunes of the other comparator parishes, South Cove experienced a small increase in its population, Covehithe remained fairly stable but both Kessingland and Benacre saw losses although not to the dramatic effect as at Easton.

The variances in the demographics of the communities from 1327-1603 can be better understood when the different coastal topographical characteristics being experienced at Easton and at Southwold are compared to those occurring at Kessingland, Benacre and to a certain extent, Covehithe. For Easton, the opening up of the haven and the development of a hythe and market during the latter fourteenth century and an accompanying increase in maritime trade during the fifteenth century coincided with the increases in its population. By 1500, Southwold also witnessed access improvements to its harbour for maritime trade, in the wake of the decline at Dunwich, and had grown and been granted borough status.<sup>256</sup> At Kessingland and Benacre, the silting up and accretion at the River Hundred had led to the demise of the early medieval harbour at Kessingland and the associated demise of fishing and

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<sup>256</sup> For a discussion of the wider economic significance of incorporation or borough status see; Mark Bailey, 'Self-Government in the Small Towns of Late Medieval England', in *Commercial Activity, Markets and Entrepreneurs in the Middle Ages, Essays in Honour of Richard Britnell* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), 107-28.

maritime trade for both communities.<sup>257</sup> The demographic decline at Covehithe between 1327 and 1524, when compared to the increase at Easton, is more difficult to explain when just examining topographical changes and points to other influential elements. The presence in 1524 at Easton Bavents of 8 'aliens' or immigrants listed within the Lay Subsidy, (13% of the 60 males listed) provided further clues. None of the aliens stated where they originate from, however, name comparisons with others listed on the England's Immigrants database (EIDB) indicate Scots, Dutch, Flemish, Icelandic and French origins.<sup>258</sup> This identifying and taxing of persons, not born in England, was not a new undertaking and the 1524 and earlier alien subsidies of the fifteenth century are discussed and analysed later in this chapter and their dramatic impact on the demographic increases at Easton is examined and discussed.

### **Taxable Wealth, 1327-1598**

Having considered the evidence for crude population estimates for Easton Bavents and the six comparator communities, what does the evidence for the size and structure of taxable wealth reveal? The distribution of wealth within a vill and across a locality is one way of looking at the structure of the local society and of obtaining an introduction to allow discussions around status, power and interpersonal relationships.<sup>259</sup> Whittle argues, when looking at rural Norfolk parishes, that landed wealth stood at the heart of the economy and society in rural England, during the medieval and early modern period, when agriculture was the main source of employment and land the main source of wealth, social status and political power.<sup>260</sup> The smaller, rural maritime communities of the north-east Suffolk were not solely reliant on land and agriculture although establishing the extent of the part played by fishing and coastal trading in generating wealth is not easy. However, we can

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<sup>257</sup> William Alfred Dutt, *Guide to Kessingland* (Lowestoft: Powell and Co., 1911), 8; Cherry quotes from the papers of Rev. Chitty and gives a date of c.1500 for the 'blocking up' of Kessingland harbour. Peter Cherry, *Stone Age to Stage Coach* (Lowestoft: K.T. Publications, 2003), 7–8, 71–75.

<sup>258</sup> Within the returns for Easton Bavents there are listings for the surnames Johnson, Peyson and Davyson, it is noted that there are problems in identifying Icelanders in the alien subsidies as they use these patronymic names along with others from the Scandinavian world. W. Mark Ormrod, Bart Lambert, and Jonathan Mackman, *Immigrant England, 1300-1550* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 111; Further research into the origin of names can be found at, 'Resident Aliens in the Late Middle Ages', England's Immigrants 1330-1550, accessed 11 February 2021, <https://www.englandimmigrants.com/page>.

<sup>259</sup> Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety, Terling*, 31.

<sup>260</sup> Jane Whittle, 'Inheritance, Marriage, Widowhood and Remarriage: A Comparative Perspective on Women and Landholding in North-East Norfolk, 1440–1580', *Continuity and Change* 13, no. 1 (1998): 33.

reconstruct the structures of wealth over time and consider whether any changes are evident which correlate with other changes in population, economy or coastal morphology.

The Domesday returns provided geld assessments for the larger units of landholding but there are major difficulties in assessing these in any meaningful way. For example, an overall valuation was given of 20s for the holdings of Gilbert the Crossbowman, which also included the valuation for a portion of his holdings in Chediston. Southwold and Kessingland were listed for 'herring renders', with Southwold liable to pay with 25,000 herring and Kessingland with 1,000 herring. For Kessingland there was a valuation for part of the holdings of £8, plus an ounce of gold which appears to be an unusual entry.<sup>261</sup> It is clearly difficult to compare such disparate units of assessment reliably and will therefore not be attempted here. The Lay Subsidies of 1327, 1524, 1568 and 1598 will be examined, and the value of the combined tax payments of each comparator vill calculated, along with the average paid per person which will provide a crude assessment of the wealth of each individual vill.<sup>262</sup>

### **Lay Subsidy, 1327 and the 1449 reductions**

The Lay Subsidy of 1327 will provide the base information for a comparison study. As noted earlier, the 1327 Easton returns are combined with Reydon, and having separated out the two based on the secure identification of the 18 taxpayers of Easton within the return, this figure will be used. An additional break-down will also be calculated of the wealth and social hierarchy of the population of the vills and how this contributed to the overall payments made in 1327 in line with the parameters given for a similar break down of the 1524 Lay Subsidy by Wrightson & Levine (**Table 5**).<sup>263</sup>

The total tax rendered by Easton was the second lowest in the locality, and a large proportion (83%) was paid in the lowest two tax bands which indicates a relatively poor and small settlement at this date. Northales, whilst having a larger population mirrored Easton in that 84% of the tax paid was from those in the lower two tax bands. For South Cove and Kessingland this is even more evident with nearly 95% of their

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<sup>261</sup> Williams and Martin, *Little Domesday Book*.

<sup>262</sup> Due to Benacre being listed in 1327 along with the vills of Bulcampe and Bregg no taxable wealth information can be extracted, and it has been omitted from this comparison.

<sup>263</sup> Thomas de Bavent is Lord of the Manor in 1327 and is assessed at 5s, this amount has been taken as the cut off figure for higher status persons within the vill. It is recognised that this break down requires further investigation and testing. Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety, Terling*, 33–34.

total tax paid by those assessed in the lower two categories. Southwold meanwhile had its total mainly paid by those assessed in the mid-range categories.

An average calculation of tax paid per person shows a crude economic listing of those in South Cove and Kessingland were the poorest, only paying 13d and those in Southwold the richest paying 28d per person. Easton, Reydon and Northales are shown as of a similar economic standing at 21d and 20d respectively, which, when compared with the average for Blything hundred, indicates they were slightly above average. Kessingland, in Mutford hundred falls slightly below the Hundred average at 13d compared to 18d.

An indenture survives at the TNA which lists the permissible reductions in the Lay Subsidy liable from each vill in the year 1449.<sup>264</sup> This was a time of extended and pronounced economic recession, which the Crown recognised by making various allowances in the payment of tax that year. Its significance in assessing the taxable wealth of townships in Suffolk has been discussed by Dymond and Virgoe who stated around 400 townships and boroughs were listed receiving relief due to their being 'devastated, wasted, destroyed, impoverished...'.<sup>265</sup> Easton Bavents and five of the comparator communities received some tax reduction, against the set amounts established in the Lay Subsidy of 1334. Reydon recorded the smallest percentage change at 6.98% followed by Northales at 11.11%. Kessingland, Southwold and South Cove received higher percentage relief at 18.42%, 19.17% and 20.34% indicating greater impoverishment. Easton Bavents received the highest relief at 23.18%.<sup>266</sup> Benacre was not listed as receiving the taxation allowance which indicates that economically it was faring better than the other comparator communities.<sup>267</sup>

### **Lay Subsidy, 1524**

As stated previously, the Lay Subsidy of 1524 is recognised as the most comprehensive amongst the sixteenth century taxation listings and can provide insights into the social make up and wealth of the individuals within local communities.

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<sup>264</sup> Schedule of reductions relating to the fifteenth and tenth granted to Henry VI, for Suffolk, E 179/180/100, 1449, TNA.

<sup>265</sup> Dymond and Virgoe, 'Reduced Population and Wealth', 76.

<sup>266</sup> Dymond and Virgoe, see Appendix 2 at 91–92.

<sup>267</sup> It should be noted that the 'vills' which Benacre was linked and assessed with in 1327, namely Bulcampe and Bregge, were given tax relief.

Sheail states 'it is probably safe to assume that a picture of England based on the lay subsidy returns, while neither complete or accurate in all its details, does reflect some of the major distribution of wealth in the 1520s'.<sup>268</sup> Here the methodology devised by Wrightson and Levine for their study on the parish of Terling has been followed.<sup>269</sup> This involves allocating the taxpayers into one of four broad categories based on the hierarchy of their taxable wealth. However, as Terling was a rural farming community the differing fishing and maritime occupations of the inhabitants of the coastal parishes have been considered and correlated into their contemporary social position within the community (**Table 6**).<sup>270</sup>

In 1524 subtle changes can be witnessed. Southwold continued to return the highest average tax paid by its inhabitants at 53d, followed by Easton Bavents and Covehithe who returned similar averages at 34d and 33d. Kessingland, South Cove and Reydon are all evenly assessed at 21d and 24d and Benacre returned the smallest average at only 14d, less than half the amount returned for Easton and Covehithe and nearly a quarter of that for Southwold. The average for Blything hundred at 37d, was slightly higher than that returned at Easton Bavents, which is evidence that whilst in decline, compared to 1327, Easton Bavents has not fallen below that of the hundred average as had Kessingland at 24d, when compared to Mutford hundred average of 29d.

Looking at the social economic hierarchy, Easton and Southwold had the greater percentage of those assessed as higher taxpayers, but also higher percentages of those assessed as lower taxpayers too. Further analysis follows later in this chapter to try and ascertain if payments calculated for aliens or immigrants within these overall totals have skewed the figures as Kessingland had 2 immigrants within its total population count, Easton 8, Covehithe 1 and Southwold 8. At Easton, of the sixty men originally listed, the eight male immigrants related to 13.3% of the adult male population liable to pay tax whilst at Southwold the eight immigrants equated to only 8%.

A closer analysis, using contemporaneous documents of the higher taxpayers in Easton indicates that the wealth of the community in 1524 still drew upon both fishing activities and coastal trading. James Sponer, owned vessels which were sailing to Iceland in 1533, he was also named in 1531 as the lessee of Easton Bavents manor

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<sup>268</sup>J. Sheail views from 'The Regional Distribution of Wealth in England as Indicated in the Lay Subsidy returns of 1524/5', Ph.D. thesis (University of London, 1968), cited by; Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety, Terling*, 32, fn.21.

<sup>269</sup> Wrightson and Levine, 34.

<sup>270</sup> Wrightson and Levine, 34.

and in his will of 1537, he described himself as a 'merchant' and left over £100 in bequests.<sup>271</sup> Two of the other five higher taxpayers, Thomas Blomefield and Robert Lee both left bequests in their wills which indicate they were active in fishing along with the ownership of vessels.<sup>272</sup> Sporer and Blomefield were assessed on goods of £20 which confirms the categorisations of social status as devised by Wrightson and Levine.

### **Lay Subsidy, 1568**

The next Lay Subsidy examined was that for 1568.<sup>273</sup> Parliament had granted the subsidy in 1566, leivable over two years and an analysis of the second return for 1568 follows. The threshold for this assessment was raised to 20s per year for land or £3 worth of moveable goods. Immigrants who had no taxable land or goods were liable for a 2d poll tax in the second year. Due to the raising of the thresholds for liability, the same criteria for assessing the economic make-up of the vill cannot be achieved as in 1524. Details of the percentage of the tax being assessed on either lands or goods and the percentage of the total of immigrants has been extracted in an attempt to provide data on the value of lands over goods or vice versa within the vills, (**Table 7**). Details of Blything Hundred average figures have also been calculated which allow a comparison to be made with Easton Bavents and the six comparator communities. The percentage difference in the number of inhabitants liable to pay the tax due to the raising of the thresholds also allows a comparison of their economic decline.

The most obvious change here was the 87% reduction on the number of inhabitants being assessed for tax at Easton Bavents. Easton had either rapidly depopulated between 1524 and 1568, certainly when compared to the other communities, or a higher percentage of its population were now under the thresholds imposed. Certainly, the base figure of eight payees compared to the sixty in 1524 is immediately suggestive of major depopulation but the rise in the tax threshold must also be taken into account even though we can never know the percentage of those who have now fallen under the tax threshold. The average reduction of taxpayers for the hundred was 54% but Easton, Kessingland, Benacre, and Covehithe all experienced above

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<sup>271</sup> List of ships returning from Iceland, 1533, SP1/80/1380 f.64, TNA, Kew; Survey, c.1431-1531; For all following will references of named Easton Bavents inhabitants, see Appendix 1 – names listed in chronological order of probate.

<sup>272</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>273</sup> Sydenham Henry Augustus Hervey, *Suffolk in 1568, Being the Return for a Subsidy Granted in 1566*, Suffolk Green Books, XII (Bury St. Edmunds: Paul & Mathew, 1909).

average declines in their population and or economic standing from 1524. For Easton 38% were assessed for payment of tax on the value of land over goods, for Covehithe it was 47%, whereas for Southwold only 2% were assessed on the value of their land. Initially this is suggestive of further evidence of Southwold's rising status as the premier town on this stretch of the coast and the decline of the neighbouring rural areas. Southwold however had 33% of its total inhabitants who were liable for tax given as immigrants and who were treated differently for taxation purposes, and which affected the final figures, although the presence of so many aliens does emphasise the importance of Southwold to outsiders at this time.

In terms of the average amount of tax paid per person, South Cove's ten inhabitants paid the highest at 74d, which was 9d higher than the average for Blything hundred, (**Table 7**). All the other vills returned lower than average figures per person. Southwold's figures appear low at 42d, however the immigrant total in the communities, mainly paying only 2d each, have skewed its figures. Easton and Covehithe returned similar average amounts per person paid at 50d and 51d, with both having a higher percentage of their total tax assessment based on goods rather than on lands. Neither community had any immigrants listed, in contrast to 1524, when 13.3% of the base figure for Easton Bavents was made up of immigrants. This indicates that by the third quarter of the sixteenth century Easton Bavents has become less attractive to immigrants.

### **Lay Subsidy, 1598**

The final Lay Subsidy of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to be examined was granted in 1597 and was to be paid in three instalments. The thresholds for this assessment were similar to those for the 1568 subsidy set at £3 worth of moveable goods or land worth 20s or more. Immigrants who had no taxable assets paid an 8d per head poll tax. The returns for this subsidy for Suffolk have not been published in a transcribed and indexed form, so the originals at TNA have been used (**Table 8**).<sup>274</sup>

The 1598 returns show a further dramatic reduction in the number of inhabitants of Easton Bavents assessed to pay tax, with a 75% drop on those assessed for the 1568 subsidy which had the same thresholds for liability. Further qualitative research in later chapters will aim to understand if this was due to a drop in the economic fortunes of the vill, a dramatic drop in the population or a combination of both factors.

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<sup>274</sup> Lay Subsidy, 1598, E179/182/427, rots 3d, 4, 4d, 6 and 9, TNA.

Covehithe (Northales) lost approximately 50% of its inhabitants liable for the subsidy when compared to 1568 whereas South Cove and Southwold remained static with similar numbers liable for assessment.

The average amount paid per person for tax at Easton Bavents was 144d, second to South Cove's higher rate of 165d. Covehithe returned only a 96d average. The average paid over the seven communities for which the returns have been transcribed was 106d. It can be deduced from this lay subsidy that Easton Bavents had few, but wealthy taxpayers, consistent with a depopulated settlement. In contrast, Covehithe would appear to have had more, but poorer taxpayers in its community, reflecting a wider range of socio-economic groups. Southwold, with finite land resources and with an expanding population had a higher percentage of those taxed on goods rather than land holdings and returned an average tax paid per person of 101d however Southwold still had a percentage of immigrants in its returns.

In 1598 the two men listed for tax at Easton were Edward Benefice and Humphrey Perse, both of long-standing resident families, whose forebears had been engaged in mercantile activities, fishing and coastal trade. Both were assessed only on their moveable goods as their landholdings did not reach the required threshold of being worth 20s per year, but these two returns do provide an above average price per person paid. Despite this, Edward Benefice is described as a yeoman of Easton Bavents when his will was proven in 1616 and he bequeathed both copyhold property and land along with freehold lands, messuages and tenements at Easton.<sup>275</sup> Perse, also described as a yeoman in his will in 1608, was buried in Gisleham, a parish 6 miles to the north of Easton and he bequeathed his lands in Easton Bavents along with more land and property in Carlton Colville, Gisleham and Rushmere.<sup>276</sup> This additional information indicates that by c.1600 land holding in Easton was becoming concentrated into fewer hands and suggests that land values were lower than in neighbouring vills. Easton Bavents profile as noted before was consistent with that of a depopulated settlement and evidence points to sea erosion and flooding reducing the value of land and the area of land available.

One way of illustrating the relative fortunes of the communities local to Easton Bavents during the course of the sixteenth century is to calculate the assessed taxable wealth for each vill as a percentage of the combined total for the subsidies of 1524, 1568 and 1598 (**Table 9**). It illustrates that the percentage contributions of Easton and

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<sup>275</sup> Appendix 1.

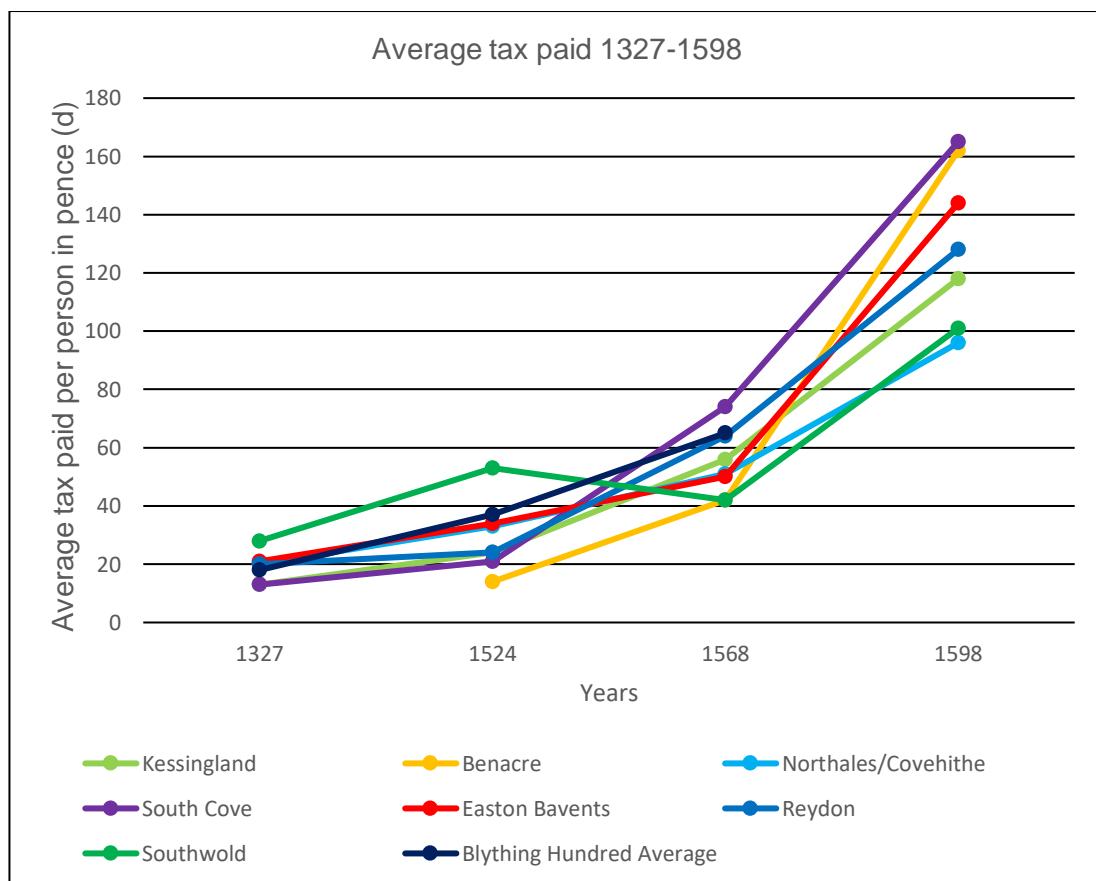
<sup>276</sup> Appendix 1.

Covehithe (Northales) both dramatically declined over the period. Easton contributed 20% in 1524 but only 4% in 1598. Northales also declined from 20% to 13%. The continuing rise and dominance of Southwold is witnessed through its rise from 60% in 1524 to 83% in 1598.

### Summary of wealth trends, 1327-1598

As with the population estimates discussed earlier, what do these crude economic figures, plotted over time indicate for the communities of Easton Bavents and its near neighbours (Figure 17).

**Figure 17 – Graph detailing comparison of average prices paid per person at tax subsidy dates – set against average for the Blything hundred, 1327-1598**



Source – See Tables 5-8 for tax figures paid.

To summarise, in 1327 the total tax rendered by Easton was the second lowest locally, and a large minority of taxpayers (39%) paid in the lowest tax band, all of which are indicative of a relatively small and poor settlement. Tax assessed per head was similar to Northales and Reydon and marginally above the average for Blything hundred. For Easton, an economic rise started post 1449, as at that date it still qualified for taxation

help. In 1524 Easton's mean tax paid per head remained on average for the hundred, although it possessed a higher proportion of wealthier taxpayers than many of its neighbours. The presence of a high percentage of aliens paying the subsidy has potentially 'skewed' these figures. Between 1449 and 1524 Easton reached its economic zenith, although the lack of taxation returns for this period means this is difficult to evidence.

Over the next century the number of taxpayers declined sharply, although the average assessable wealth of those who remained in the community rose. By 1568, with no alien tax payers to contort the figures, Easton's wealth was in the main generated by the value of 'goods' rather than on the value of land holdings as is witnessed at South Cove and Reydon. This disparity is more evident by 1598 when, with few but wealthier tax payers, no tax is levied on the value of land holdings at Easton. Between 1524 and 1598 Easton Bavents share of the taxation paid by it, Northales and Southwold fell from 20% to just 4% whilst that of Southwold rose to 83%. These figures illustrate a community with a drastically diminishing population and associated wealth.

The same topographical changes of the opening up of the haven, the development of a hithe allied with an associated increase in maritime trade, as discussed in the summary of demographic trends can be seen to have impacted on the taxable wealth of Easton for the period 1449-1524. Likewise, the dynamic coastal changes wrought by extensive flooding of low-lying land, erosion and accretion during the period post 1524 to 1598 can be allied to the economic decline witnessed over the same period. By the dawn of the seventeenth century any vestiges of maritime economic wealth have completely disappeared with the haven long gone and the value of land degenerated. The effect of the alien population on Easton's demography and economic wealth will now be discussed.

### **Alien population figures and taxation wealth, 1440-1542**

The returns of the 1524 Lay Subsidy recorded the presence of 134 alien immigrant's resident in the county of Suffolk and as noted before eight of these were to be found at Easton Bavents.<sup>277</sup> These eight men comprised 13% of the males liable to pay tax and 2.5% of the overall crude population figure assessed for the vill at this date. When compared to the 2.4% of aliens present at the urban port of Great Yarmouth, eighty

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<sup>277</sup> Hervey notes that there are approximately 150 aliens recorded and lists 128 in the name index. England's Immigrant database records the presence of 134. Hervey, *Suffolk 1524*, 85; 'Resident Aliens in the Late Middle Ages'.

years earlier in 1440, these figures represent an unusually high figure for a rural maritime community.<sup>278</sup> This provides a strong affirmation of Ormrod et al's observation that 'far from being a solely urban phenomenon, immigration was a regular reality in the small towns and villages of rural England'.<sup>279</sup> This observation does not however imply that aliens were evenly distributed throughout these rural areas, instead tending to congregate in areas where their skills and expertise would be valued. The fashion industries were attractive to many aliens with demand for tailors, hatmakers, leatherworkers and shoemakers (cordwainers) being highlighted by Ormrod et al as areas where alien expertise could be utilised.<sup>280</sup> What then attracted these early sixteenth century immigrants to concentrate at Easton Bavents? Quantifying and tracing the presence (or absence) of immigrants in Easton Bavents and its vicinity, and the key changes over time, provide another important strand of evidence in reconstructing its rise and decline between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries.

From the 1300s England had been a temporary and permanent home to thousands of people not born in the country. The Middle Ages term 'alien' applied to those persons moving to a new country from that of their birth, derived from the Latin '*alienigenus*' and was understood as someone who owed no direct allegiance to the king or the sovereign power.<sup>281</sup> Earlier alien subsidies had been levied on the immigrant population at various dates between 1440 and 1487 and closer analysis of these returns and the Lay Subsidy of 1524 has enabled the population density and taxable wealth of immigrants within Easton and its environs to be examined. The surviving nominal data for these returns are included in the online database *England's Immigrants, 1330-1550: Resident Aliens in the Later Middle Ages* (EIDB) collated by researchers, led by the late W. Mark Ormrod during the period 2012-2015.<sup>282</sup>

### **Alien Subsidy, 1440**

In 1440 the English Parliament implemented a tax payable only by those born outside of the kingdom which tapped into xenophobic feelings prevalent in the 1430s that aliens in the country possessed greater wealth than did the king's subjects born in the

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<sup>278</sup> See Table 2 - Estimated alien presence in English provisional towns, 1377-1524/5 in ; Ormrod, Lambert, and Mackman, *Immigrant England, 1300-1550*, 62.

<sup>279</sup> Ormrod, Lambert, and Mackman, 7.

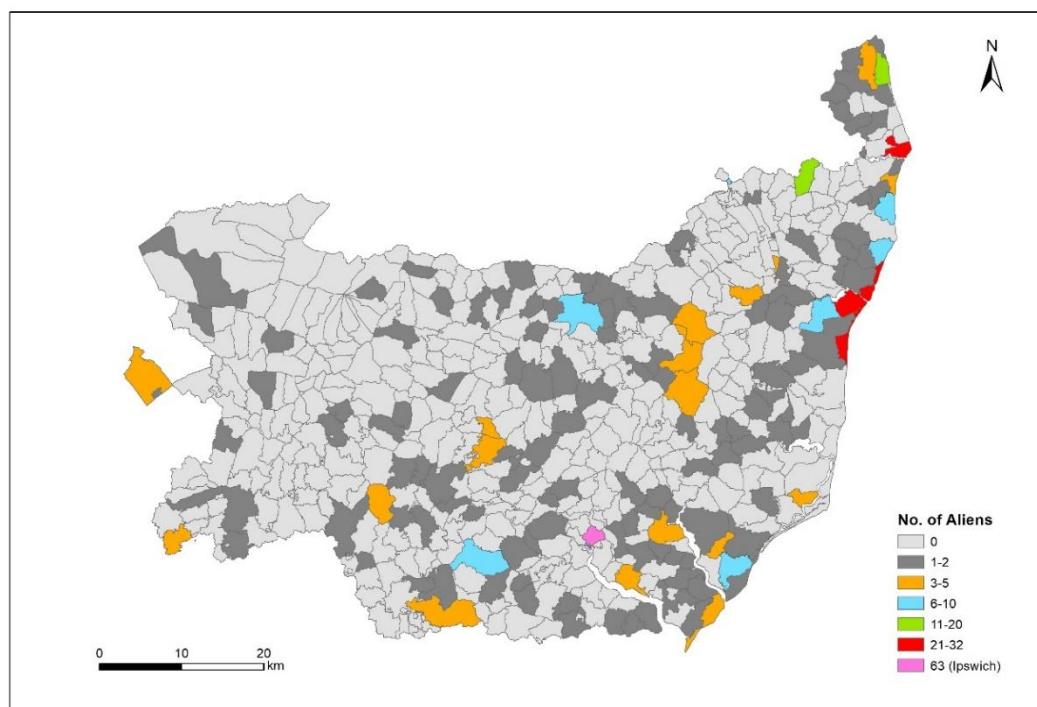
<sup>280</sup> Ormrod, Lambert, and Mackman, 128-31.

<sup>281</sup> Ormrod, Lambert, and Mackman, 8.

<sup>282</sup> 'Resident Aliens in the Late Middle Ages'.

country.<sup>283</sup> The inquisitions for the Suffolk Alien Subsidy return were taken during April 1440 and the return for Blything hundred was recorded at Dunwich on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> April.<sup>284</sup> For Suffolk as a whole, 524 aliens were listed in 161 separate vills, which, with an overall headcount of just over 18,500 people, equated to 2.8 % of the population total for the country.<sup>285</sup> Closer examination of the spatial distribution of these 524 persons provided evidence of clusters in the maritime communities of the north-east coast.<sup>286</sup> The town and inland port of Ipswich recorded the highest return of 63 persons, followed by Lowestoft with 31 and Dunwich with 30. Easton Bavents and Southwold then recorded the fourth highest returns for the county with 24 respectively, closely followed by Walberswick with 21. For a visual representation of the spatial distribution of the aliens within Suffolk in 1440 see Figure 18.

**Figure 18 – Spatial distribution of aliens in Suffolk, 1440**



Note – Those parishes marked in pink and red = Ipswich 63, Lowestoft 31, Dunwich 30, Easton Bavents 24, Southwold 24, Walberswick 21

Sources – Suffolk returns for 1440 as listed on EIDB accessible at <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/> . Original returns at TNA – Alien Subsidy, 1440, E 179/180/92, parts 1 and 2

<sup>283</sup> Tax Grant Details, The National Archives, E179, E 179/180/92, accessed 27 February 2023, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/e179/notes.asp?slctgrantid=209&action=3>.

<sup>284</sup> Alien subsidy, 1440, E 179/180/92, parts 1 and 2, TNA.

<sup>285</sup> ‘Resident Aliens in the Late Middle Ages’; W. Mark Ormrod, ‘England’s Immigrants, 1330–1550: Aliens in Later Medieval and Early Tudor England’, *Journal of British Studies* 59, no. 2 (2020): 248.

<sup>286</sup> There was no return for Bury St Edmunds.

Kowaleski notes that analysis of the 1440 Alien Subsidy reveals 'in Suffolk about fifty-four per cent of the alien population lived in coastal settlements, with almost nine aliens per settlement, far higher than the 1.85 aliens who lived in the 129 inland locations in the county'.<sup>287</sup> Kowaleski goes on to state that over half the aliens in coastal Suffolk lived in the combined communities of Ipswich, Lowestoft, Dunwich and Southwold.<sup>288</sup> Whilst these figures demonstrate the high numbers of aliens clustered on the east coast they fail to include the numbers of those in the other small vills specifically on the north-east coast including Easton Bavents, Walberswick, Gorleston, Covehithe, Pakefield and Kessingland. Between South-Town on the Norfolk border and Dunwich there are 12 coastal vills with 169 resident aliens. This clustering of aliens in the coastal communities on this small stretch of the coastline is evidence of maritime economic opportunities which must have been attractive to the newcomers. An understanding of the numbers of aliens who were mariners or in connected occupations provides further evidence of such an attraction, especially for Easton Bavents. Along the East Anglian coast, the ports were suffering due to national problems of low populations, war and credit shortages, however trade with the Low Countries was one area which remained a 'bright spot', as highlighted by Childs.<sup>289</sup>

Original nationalities are listed or can be inferred from given surnames for twenty of those listed at Easton.<sup>290</sup> There are 7 Frenchmen, 5 Zeelanders (including 1 woman), 3 Hollanders, 2 Dutch, 1 Breton, 1 Brabanter and most uniquely 1 Spaniard. It is not surprising that over half originated from the Low Countries, only a short distance across the North Sea. In Suffolk 66% of aliens were 'Dutch', in Norfolk they accounted for 75% and in Essex 45%.<sup>291</sup> The translation of the fifteenth century term 'Duche' to modern English 'Dutch' can be problematic because it encompasses not only those from the Low Countries and north-west Germany but also for those from eastern territories settled by the Germans in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Kowaleski credits Jim Bolton for providing this information. Kowaleski, 'Demography of Maritime Communities', 106.

<sup>288</sup> A total of 149 aliens. Kowaleski, 71.

<sup>289</sup> Wendy R. Childs, 'East Anglia's Trade in the North Sea World', in *East Anglia and Its North Sea World in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), 197.

<sup>290</sup> Examples of inferred nationality surnames include Selander (Zeeland), Frensshman (Frenchman) and Ducheman (Dutch).

<sup>291</sup> Ormrod, Lambert, and Mackman, *Immigrant England, 1300-1550*, 103.

<sup>292</sup> Susan Maddock, 'Encountering The "Duche" In Margery Kempe's Lynn', *The Fifteenth Century XIX* (2022): 91.

For four of the aliens listed at Easton Bavents their occupational status can be inferred from their surnames. There was a Barber, a Taylour (tailor), a Smith and a Cok (cook). Edmund Cok was one of only 18 persons from the Iberian Peninsula listed on the entire England's Immigrants site in 1440.<sup>293</sup> He was taxed as a 'Spaniard', indicating he originated from the kingdom of Castile. It is reasonable to assume he arrived at Easton as a crewman on a trading or fishing vessel. He was not a short-term visitor, as in his will, written in 1454, proven in 1455, he bequeathed his fishing nets to fellow Easton Bavents inhabitants along with monetary bequests for church fabric repairs to Easton church and others.<sup>294</sup> Ormrod questions the apparently high levels of assimilation of immigrants into their localities along with apparent toleration. In leaving bequests to the parish church, Edmund Cok was obviously accepted by his community and allowed to worship there. John Butt, a Zeelander, was assessed for tax at Easton Bavents on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1440 and it can be proven that he was another mariner as he was a master on a fishing vessel.<sup>295</sup> In 1466 he is described as 'of Eston' and as a 'mayst' (master) in the fishing farkoste (farcost) of Jon Paschelowe of Walberswick.<sup>296</sup> Of the 24 aliens listed in 1440, eight have their status listed as servants to five different men of Easton Bavents.<sup>297</sup> Of these employers three have strong maritime connections, as can be evidenced by John Pope, who in 1415 was party to an appointment looking to keep 'the sea for the protection of fishermen' and by John Cook, who left will bequests in 1453 of various nets to his family.<sup>298</sup> Whilst described as servants it is reasonable to assume these men worked for their employers within the maritime industry as crewmen on board vessels. A further seven can be linked with maritime occupations through direct evidence. Further qualitative research into the lives of the aliens, their maritime links and their assimilation into the community is discussed more fully in Chapters 5-7.

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<sup>293</sup> Ormrod, Lambert, and Mackman, *Immigrant England, 1300-1550*, 117–18.

<sup>294</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>295</sup> Alien Subsidy, 1440, E179/180/92 part 2, m.12, TNA.

<sup>296</sup> A farcost was a type of late medieval two masted trading vessel which could be converted for fishing. Butcher, *Rigged for River and Sea*, 63; Rev. R. W. M. Lewis, trans., *Walberswick Churchwarden Accounts 1450-1499* (Walberswick: Privately, 1949), 130.

<sup>297</sup> The term servant during the later middle ages was a nebulous one and could relate to many different activities. Ormrod, Lambert, and Mackman, *Immigrant England, 1300-1550*, 164.

<sup>298</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, Prepared under the Superintendence of the Deputy Keeper of the Records 1413-1416, Henry V*, vol. 1 (London: HMSO, 1910), 364–65; Appendix 1.

### Alien Subsidy, 1483

The taxation of aliens continued intermittently during the fifteenth century until 1487 with varying exemptions for nationalities and status granted.<sup>299</sup> The returns are held at the TNA and unfortunately many are fragile and illegible due to damage. Many of the returns also do not include exact locations of the aliens listed, only a hundred listing. The tax return for 1483 provided both place of abode and original nationality and has been examined here. Inquisitions for Suffolk were held during August with the one recording alien inhabitants for the northern part of Blything hundred taken at Blythburgh on August 8<sup>th</sup>.<sup>300</sup> A total of 351 aliens were recorded in Suffolk, an overall reduction from the number recorded in 1440, which in part can be accounted for by the exemptions and exclusions applied within the criteria for inclusion. There was still a clear cluster of aliens in north-eastern coastal Suffolk, specifically Easton, Southwold, Dunwich and Walberswick which must indicate that maritime economic conditions were still attractive to them. The highest concentration was at Ipswich which recorded 85 aliens, then Bury St Edmunds with 28. In third and fourth places were Southwold with 19 and Walberswick and Dunwich both with 18 aliens. Easton Bavents came in fifth place with 15. In 1440 aliens were resident in 161 different communities within Suffolk whereas in 1483 there were only 71 different locations recorded as the immigrant presence had not only contracted in numbers, but it had concentrated in fewer areas.<sup>301</sup> Figure 19 and **Table 10** provide further spatial distribution information.

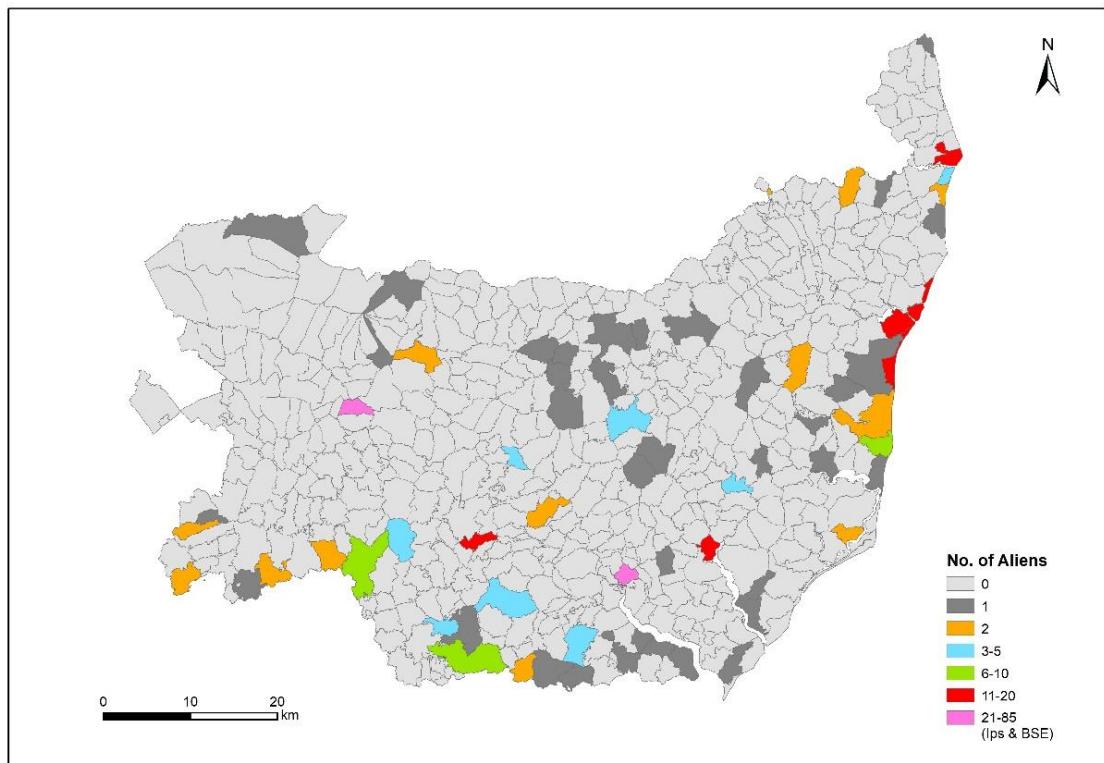
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<sup>299</sup> In 1483 Spanish, Breton and German merchants were exempt. Maureen Jurkowski, Carrie L. Smith, and David Crook, *Lay Taxes in England and Wales 1188-1688*, vol. 31, Public Record Office Handbook (London: PRO Publications, 1998), 120.

<sup>300</sup> Alien Subsidy, 1483, E179/180/111, rot. 3, TNA.

<sup>301</sup> At Bildeston, a small community to the west of Ipswich, eleven skilled alien cloth workers are recorded in the employ of a Londoner, John Stanesby and to the east of Ipswich, fourteen aliens are recorded at the port of Woodbridge on the Deben estuary. Ormrod, Lambert, and Mackman, *Immigrant England, 1300-1550*, 150.

**Figure 19 – Spatial distribution of aliens in Suffolk, 1483**



Note - Those parishes marked in pink and red – Ipswich 85, Bury St Edmunds 21, Southwold 19, Dunwich 18, Walberswick 18, Easton Bavents 15, Woodbridge 14, Lowestoft 11, Bildeston 11

Sources - Suffolk returns for 1483 as listed on EIDB accessible at <https://www.englandimmigrants.com/> . Original returns at TNA – Alien Subsidy, E179/180/111, 1483

The composition of the original nationality of the aliens at Easton had changed between 1440 and 1483. There were now at least 8 Zeelanders, 3 Brabanters, 1 Fleming and 3 Scots recorded. No French persons were recorded but immigrants from Scotland now appeared. Nationally, far fewer French were recorded in the 1483 returns which can be ascribed to better relations after the cessation of hostilities between England and France in 1453, less of a need to record ‘enemy aliens’ and to the applied exemptions from the tax for Normans and those from Gascony after 1449.<sup>302</sup> In the 1460s, Childs notes that England’s improving political relations with Scotland resulted in a small presence of Scottish ships along the East coast and this probably accounts for the presence of the 3 Scots.<sup>303</sup> For those where no place of origin was recorded nominal evidence points to them coming from Iceland, Scotland

<sup>302</sup> Ormrod, Lambert, and Mackman, 100.

<sup>303</sup> Childs, ‘East Anglia’s Trade in the North Sea World’, 199.

and the Low Countries. The three men from Brabant all had strong maritime links.<sup>304</sup> Peter Westdeyn wrote his will in 1473 and described himself as a ‘maryner’.<sup>305</sup> John Corneleyes had his will proved in 1510 and was the owner of two ‘chypes’, one of which was in Iceland and which he bequeathed along with fishing nets to family and to one John Smith.<sup>306</sup> John Smyth was the third of the Brabant men and he was described by John Corneleyes in 1510 as ‘was my servant’.

**Figure 20 – Plan of the Low Countries, 16<sup>th</sup> century**



Source - Amy Eberlin, 'Flemish Religious Emigration in the 16th/17th Centuries', University of St Andrews, accessed 24 August 2024, <https://flemish.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/2014/02/07/flemish-religious-emigration-in-the-16th17th-centuries-2/>. Amended to highlight Zeeland and Brabant.

### Aliens and the Lay Subsidy, 1524

The last specific taxation list, recording aliens only, was compiled in 1487. As previously noted, the 1524 Tudor Lay Subsidy recorded the presence of aliens in vills alongside all other inhabitants who were liable for taxation. In the 1524 listing there was still a high concentration cluster of aliens on the north-eastern Suffolk coast. Ipswich and Dunwich returned the highest concentration within the county with 15, followed by Lowestoft with 13 and then Southwold with 9. Easton Bavents had the

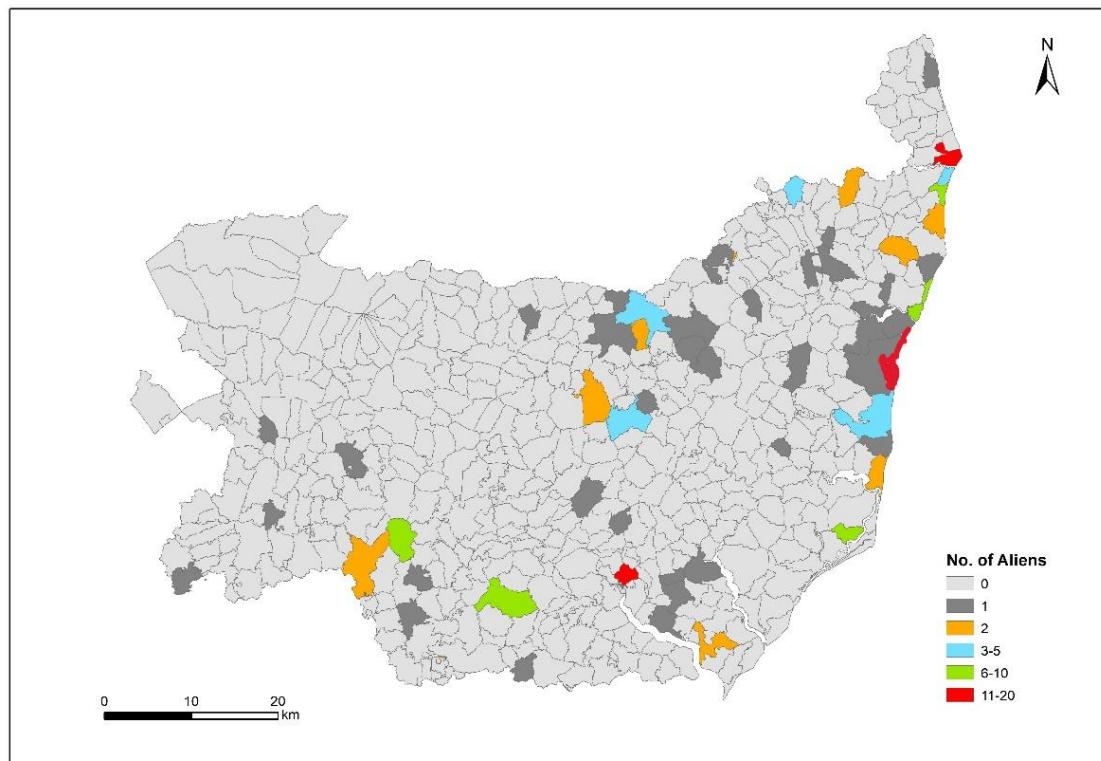
<sup>304</sup> Brabant is a traditional geographical region of the Low Countries and is described as Belgium/Netherlands on EIDB, see, ‘Resident Aliens in the Late Middle Ages’.

<sup>305</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>306</sup> Appendix 1.

fifth highest concentration in the county with 8. The occurrence of aliens within 57 separate communities had again dropped from that recorded in 1483 and the spatial distribution had subtly differed. No immigrants were recorded at Benacre, Reydon or South Cove (Figure 21 and **Table 10**).

Figure 21 – Spatial distribution of aliens in Suffolk, 1524



Note - Those parishes marked in red and green = Dunwich 15, Ipswich 15, Lowestoft 13, Southwold 9, Easton 8, Orford 7, Pakefield 6, Lavenham 6, Hadleigh 6.

Sources - Sources - Suffolk returns for 1524 as listed on England's Immigrants database accessible at <https://www.englandimmigrants.com>; Sydenham Henry Augustus Hervey, *Suffolk 1524*, Suffolk Green Books, X (Woodbridge: G. Booth, 1910)

### Alien economic significance, 1440-1524

The economic significance of the presence of so many aliens within the north-east coastal maritime communities warrants further discussion. The criteria for the taxation of aliens and the amounts charged differed over the period 1440 to 1524 making comparisons difficult to draw across all three returns. In the 1440 and 1483 returns, householders and non-householders were identified and differing rates of tax assessed. The returns were also annotated to show if those who were liable paid the tax or were classed as 'moved' and therefore did not pay the tax. In 1524 it was the

immigrants' value of land, goods or wages which decided the rate of tax to be paid and if they were not liable for any of these, then a flat poll tax rate was levied.

For the 1440 and 1483 returns, the status of householder and non-householder have been plotted for Easton Bavents and its comparator communities (Table 11). The status of householder inferred a certain level of permanency and assimilation within a community whilst non-householder inferred a more itinerant lifestyle. Marriage to local women would also accelerate the integration and permanency of immigrants into their new community.<sup>307</sup> For Easton Bavents 50% of its immigrants listed in 1440 were householders, rising to 60% in 1483. This provided firm evidence that a majority of aliens in Easton were not transitory immigrants, but people who were settling in the vill for a longer period of time and were contributing to its economic wealth. A further indication of a more permanent lifestyle for the householder was evidenced in that wives were also listed for those given as householders in many instances. The returns for 1483 have also been assessed by plotting those householders and non-householders who paid tax or were classed as 'moved'. Walberswick has been included in the comparator figures instead of Benacre as Benacre returned no aliens in either subsidies (Table 11).

In 1440, Covehithe, Kessingland and South Cove had high percentages of aliens who were listed as householders, suggesting they were relatively permanent, with Southwold and Easton Bavents fairly evenly split between householders and non-householders. Walberswick however had a higher percentage of its aliens listed as non-householders and therefore they can be perceived to be more itinerant. There were 8 wives recorded within the returns for Easton, Southwold, Covehithe and Walberswick in 1440 and all are given as married and listed as householders again re-enforcing the sense of permanency. None of the non-householders were listed with wives reinforcing the belief that these were young, single men.

Further research indicates that of the 12 householders listed at Easton Bavents in 1440, five of them stayed in the parish and left wills or their widow left a will.<sup>308</sup> Caution must be exercised in understanding the significance of an alien being listed as 'moved' and not paying tax. Edmund Cok, the Spaniard, in 1440 was listed as a non-householder and listed as 'moved', however it is clear he did return to Easton Bavents and commit to the community. A high percentage of these immigrants were most certainly mariners and would have been away from home at various times on sea

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<sup>307</sup> Kowaleski, 'Demography of Maritime Communities', 105.

<sup>308</sup> John Butt, John Smyth, Roger Pumpey, Henry Barker and Margaret Assy. Appendix 1.

voyages. It is reasonable to assume, that for many of those listed as 'moved', were simply males away at sea and therefore not included in the Alien Subsidy. Kowaleski observes that 'clearly in the Middle Ages as later, many of the men in maritime communities were regularly absent from their homes'.<sup>309</sup>

In 1483 all of Easton Bavents immigrants were listed as having paid their tax and with a rise from 50% in 1440 to 60% in 1483 in those classed as householders suggests that its alien population was well assimilated into the community. At Dunwich, where another high count of aliens was recorded the majority of immigrants were listed as non-householders, which may point to a more migrant population.<sup>310</sup> The lives of a selection of the Easton Bavents immigrants from the 1440, 1483 and 1524 returns are analysed more fully in Chapters 5-7 where the strength of their community and family ties becomes evident.

The listing of aliens within the 1524 Lay Subsidy provided more in-depth data regarding the economic wealth and status of those identified. As noted before aliens were liable to pay a double tax of 8d on their wages or a flat poll tax of 8d if they did not receive any wages (**Table 12**).<sup>311</sup>

Judith Middleton-Stewart, in her work on wills proved within the Dunwich deanery 1370-1547, questions the validity of the returns of the 1524 Lay Subsidy with regards to the listings of assessed wealth.<sup>312</sup> She specifically questions the return for Downey Bek, an alien listed at Easton Bavents. Bek was assessed on £2 worth of goods in 1524. In his will, made in 1528, he described himself as a mariner and left bequests including £22 to be paid for a silver cross for the church of Easton Bavents and further personal bequests totalling £12 6s 8d. Middleton-Stewart concludes that this apparent gulf in his listed probate worth and that given in 1524 casts doubts on the accuracy of the subsidy. In Bek's case, this difference could be accounted for by the fact he recorded that he owned two boats and had a half share in a third, in his will of 1528, which all need to be sold to fund his bequests. The value of the vessels could easily account for the difference, and it is feasible that in the intervening 4 or 5 years, from the assessments being taken for the lay subsidy and the writing of his will, he came into the ownership of the vessels. In the 1525 returns for Lowestoft there is an entry for John Robson who was valued on £2 worth of goods but was valued at a

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<sup>309</sup> Kowaleski, 'Demography of Maritime Communities', 97.

<sup>310</sup> In 1483 Dunwich returns 18 immigrants, 10 of which are listed as non-householders.

<sup>311</sup> Jurkowski, Smith, and Crook, *Lay Taxes 1188-1688*, 31:137.

<sup>312</sup> Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:66-67.

higher rate the year before in 1524. His drop in wealth was explained as ‘the consideration of his decay ys that he lost a shyp upon the see, which was takyn wyth the Scottes to the value of £28’.<sup>313</sup> For mariners, the gaining or loss of a vessel would have dramatic consequences upon their wealth.

In the north-east Suffolk communities under analysis, Easton Bavents had the ‘wealthiest’ alien, Cornelious Lawson, who was assessed on £20 worth of goods and paid £2 of tax. In April 1522 Lawson was in London, a skipper of the vessel, *Jacobus* (of Easton) laden with a cargo of wool about to embark for Calais.<sup>314</sup> It seems reasonable to assume the assessment of his wealth was based on the value of his vessel. In Walberswick, Henry Leonard was assessed on £6 13s 14d worth of goods and in Southwold, John Yermouth on £13 6s 8d of goods, both paid 6s 8d in tax. It is Lawson’s large tax contribution which resulted in an average of 69d per immigrant being paid in Easton Bavents, over double the average of the amount paid in Blything hundred (**Table 12**). The immigrants at Easton Bavents were also in the main assessed on goods rather than on wages which if the other five were also mariners possibly points to ownership of quantities of nets whereas at Southwold the majority of immigrants were taxed as wage earners. Further up the coast at Lowestoft there were 13 male immigrants listed and all but two of them are again assessed on wages. The immigrants at Easton Bavents had a subtly different demographic which is examined and discussed more fully in Chapters 5-7.

### **Letters of Denization, 1542.**

Between 1540 and 1544, Henry VIII’s government pushed for a process of ‘mass’ denization’.<sup>315</sup> There was heightened tension over potential invasions from France and aliens were ordered to take denization or leave the country.<sup>316</sup> For a fee, an oath of allegiance to the Crown could be taken and in return the alien would be considered in the same way as if they had been born in England and would be given the rights to litigation and to buy property. This was an expensive undertaking, and it has been noted by Kowaleski that it was beyond the reach of most seamen.<sup>317</sup> In 1542 three

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<sup>313</sup> Hervey, *Suffolk 1524*, 247.

<sup>314</sup> ‘The London Customs Accounts’, V.74, pt IV, no.14.

<sup>315</sup> Ormrod, ‘England’s Immigrants, 1330–1550’, 251.

<sup>316</sup> ‘England’s Immigrants 1330 – 1550’, accessed 4 May 2024, <https://www.englandimmigrants.com/page/sources/letters-of-denization-and-other-sources>.

<sup>317</sup> Maryanne Kowaleski, “‘Alien’ Encounters in the Maritime World of Medieval England”, *Medieval Encounters* 13, no. 1 (2007): 21, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006707X174032>.

mariners from Easton Bavents are recorded as obtaining Letters of Denization. For two of them, Nicholas Saunders and George Benefice, their nationalities were given as Scot, whilst James Sampson was listed as an Orcadian.<sup>318</sup> No place of abode was listed within the documentation, but nominal linkage with probate material and with the 1524 subsidy has allowed these three men to be identified. It is feasible that other aliens in the locality of Easton also applied for such documentation but have yet to be identified. Details of the length of prior residence in England was collected, along with occupation and in some cases details of wives and children were also given. Sampson, a married fisherman with three children, had been resident in England for 38 years, Saunders, also married with five children, 33 years and Benefice, also a fisherman, with five children and an English wife, 21 years indicating all had moved to England, and potentially Easton, between c.1504 and 1520 and put down roots. There were no further alien listings for Easton Bavents in the latter Lay Subsidies of 1568 and 1598, although they were still a presence in Southwold and Walberswick, which would suggest that Easton was no longer an attractive destination to settlers from overseas. This is consistent with the evidence for the decline of population and taxable wealth during the same time frame and the decay of the haven.

A significant number of points have emerged from this analysis of aliens in Easton Bavents. Firstly, the small north-east Suffolk maritime parishes were a popular destination for immigrants from the Low Countries. Secondly, despite its relatively modest size and importance in East Anglian terms, Easton Bavents was among the top five Suffolk destinations for alien immigrants in 1440, 1483 and 1524. Thirdly, more detailed research into the lives of these Easton Bavents aliens reveals that the majority stayed in the community for a length of time, as opposed to being itinerant visitors. Merchants, shipmen, boat owners and mariners such as John Corneleyes, Cornelice Lawson and Downey Bek established roots in Easton, married there, undertook successful careers and after death, sought to be buried in its church and churchyard.

## Conclusion

When looking at the population counts of the individual communities between 1327 and 1524 there is clear evidence that Easton Bavents and Southwold witnessed a growth in their numbers. For Southwold, an expanding borough town, this was in

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<sup>318</sup> James Gairdner and R.H. Brodie, eds., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, 1542, vol. XVII (London: HMSO, 1900), April 1542, no.283 (50)..

keeping with expectations. Similarly, when assessing the wealth of the individual vills between the period 1327 to 1524 it is evident that Easton and Southwold returned the wealthiest per head returns, followed by Covehithe. For Easton Bavents, a small maritime community, why did its population and wealth expand during the 15<sup>th</sup> century whilst its neighbours at Covehithe, South Cove, Reydon and nearby Kessingland all declined? Topographical changes certainly had a major effect and have been discussed earlier in this chapter. What cannot be ignored is the potential effect a high concentration of immigrants had within the community of Easton Bavents from the 1440s through to c.1524. At Southwold, Dunwich and Walberswick these immigrants were in the main, migrant single men taking advantage of the economic opportunities available at the port town and maritime parishes. At Easton Bavents the demographic was different. Here the immigrants were in the main married men or men who put down roots and who economically were assessed on owning goods rather than being assessed only on wages. These alien men also had very strong links with maritime exploits which will be discussed more fully in later chapters when their entrepreneurial skills of shipmaster, merchant and adventurer become evident.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Manorial administration and tenurial evidence to c.1650**

#### **Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to expand on the findings from earlier chapters and further examine the topography of Easton Bavents, its tenurial structure and associated physical structures through an exploration of extant manorial records. Easton Bavents manorial ownership, its administration and economic activity will also be examined from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, with a closer focus on the period 1431-1639, with an investigation of its extant records and perquisites, which included the right to 'wreck of the sea'. The manorial system was the means by which lords exercised great influence over both the economy and the society of their tenants, and the jurisdictional rights and tenures of the medieval manor were still prevalent in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Bailey says that 'to provide a watertight definition of 'the manor' between c.1200 and c.1500 is almost impossible, because its form was fluid and its characteristics were varied'.<sup>319</sup> The extant manorial records for Easton Bavents provide examples of these varied characteristics.<sup>320</sup> During a 200-year period the manor was held by one family, originally locally resident and operating it as part of a larger local estate. As the manor was passed down through the family it became the subject of a complex legal debate until ultimately a family descendant sold it in 1639. Finally in c.1650 the manor was in the hands of a remote lord who had purchased the land for improvement purposes, although with the severe effects of flooding and erosion present, it cannot have proven to be a profitable venture.

The Manorial Documents Register (MDR) records thirty-seven separate listings of records dating from 1275-1634 surviving for the manor of Easton Bavents which are located in three separate archives.<sup>321</sup> See Appendix 2 for a fuller, updated list of extant records, covering dates and locations. The early court rolls and accounts contain

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<sup>319</sup> Mark Bailey, *The English Manor c.1200-c.1500* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 2.

<sup>320</sup> A schematic view of such characteristics can be found here, include jurisdictional rights, demesne land, capital messuage, tenements, woods, mills, church, commons, fisheries and marsh, warren and market or fair. With acknowledgements to David Dymond. Bailey, xiv, Fig. 1.

<sup>321</sup> The National Archives, 'Easton Bavents Manor', The Manorial Documents Register (The National Archives), accessed 13 November 2023, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/c/F250018>.

useful information about the creation of the market at Easton, economic activities relating to the manor's rights and perquisites, and incidental topographic information. They also provide indirect evidence for the broad scale and chronology of coastal erosion. Whilst manorial records can provide a rich seam of data and information about local life they do have their limitations. Suffolk villages were usually split between a number of different manors, so the records for a single manor rarely cover the totality of a community. Furthermore, the contents of manorial documents, especially court rolls and accounts, become less informative from the fifteenth century.

### **Extent of the manor of Easton Bavents with Empoles**

The manor of Easton Bavents with Empoles was not coterminous with the vill or township of Easton Bavents. The manor held small plots of land and property physically located in the adjacent parishes of Northales, Southwold and Reydon and likewise the manors of Southwold, Northales and Blythburgh Priory all held land located within the vill of Easton Bavents.<sup>322</sup> Although not coterminous, the manor of Easton Bavents with Empoles was the single main manor associated with the vill and was the largest administrator of land. This was unusual for Suffolk, and even more so for vills within the Blything hundred. Bailey, using 'W. A. Copinger's early, though by no means exhaustive, research into its (Suffolk's) manorial history' reconstructed the density of manors per vill (by hundred) and the Blything hundred returned on average 4.5 manors per vill.<sup>323</sup> Copinger only identified the manor of Easton Bavents associated with the vill and was not aware of the presence of the sub-manor or area known as 'Empoles'.<sup>324</sup>

A list of rents due to a John de Enepole from the vills of 'Eston, Westahale, Brampton and Stovene' recorded twelve separate holdings located in the vill of Easton. Originally dated to c.1400-c.1500, this membrane survived as part of the court records of the manor of Westhall but it clearly relates to land situated in Westhall and

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<sup>322</sup> See following pages for fuller discussion and references.

<sup>323</sup> Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, 1:28–29. Utilizing research figures from; Copinger, *Manors of Suffolk, Blything*.

<sup>324</sup> Copinger, *Manors of Suffolk, Blything*, 2:61–64. The MDR returns evidence of extant records for the manor of Westhall with Bacons, Barringtons and Empoles. A further manor of Empoles is evidenced at Ranworth, Norfolk; The National Archives, 'Manor of Westhall with Bacons, Barringtons and Empoles', accessed 22 July 2024, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/c/F250385>; The National Archives, 'Manor of Empoles, Ranworth' (The National Archives), accessed 22 July 2024, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/c/F239574>.

elsewhere.<sup>325</sup> Closer examination of the names of the landholders reveals the membrane can be dated to the 1320s as six of the persons are listed within the 1327 subsidy returns for Easton.<sup>326</sup> This land in Easton was part of wider holdings of John de Enepole spread over four vills, which by the 1390s, had become a discrete part of the manor of Easton as the court roll for 1397-98 includes a listing of estreats and is where the separate heading of 'Enepolys' is catalogued for the first time.<sup>327</sup> It appears that the main manor of Easton had acquired and engrossed the smaller manor around this time. From this date until c.1546 the court rolls for Easton generally record both court barons and court leets under a heading of 'Eston Bavent' first and then under a smaller entry for 'Eston Enepolys', later becoming Empoles. The rolls dated from 1552 are headed up as 'Eston Bavent with Empoles' but they only record juror and essoins for one entity. It is apparent from this date that the courts for the two 'manors' have been amalgamated due to the reduction in their respective business which was prevalent at this time.<sup>328</sup>

The manor to 1396 has been discussed in Chapter 3 with regards to topography and economy and it has been noted that the manor of Easton held land within the vill of Northales, including a mill. In the fourteenth century fixed assize rents relating to this land in Northales continued to be paid to the manor and recorded within the Easton accounts, plus a list of c.1408 within the court rolls of Northales manor names those tenants at Northales belonging to the manor of Easton, with 39 separate nominal entries.<sup>329</sup> The accounts of 1436-1437 also continue to record receipts for rents from the vills of Reydon, Cove, Wangford, Worlingham, Beccles, Covehithe and Southwold.<sup>330</sup> By the mid seventeenth century these outlying areas of land were no longer part of the manor. When the manor of Easton Bavents was sold in 1666 only an area of 6 acres of land within Reydon was noted as a possession of the manor with no reference to land situated anywhere else outside of the parish.<sup>331</sup> The outlying parcels of land had clearly been disposed of in the intervening period.

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<sup>325</sup> Rental, HA30/50/22/20.9 (17), c.1400-c.1500, SA.

<sup>326</sup> Galfrido de Cove and his wife Alicie, Johanne Egge, Alejandro le Yongge, Ricardo Godmond, Ricardo le Taliour. Hervey, *Suffolk 1327*, II:75.

<sup>327</sup> Court Roll and estreats, NRA17140 Russell Box 793/5, BA.

<sup>328</sup> Although the number of courts held was a fraction of what it had been in earlier years, post 1500 the manorial court still played a public and regulatory role and an active part in estate administration. Mark Forrest and Helen Watt, *Manors and Manorial Documents After 1500* (St Albans: British Association for Local History, 2022), 8-9.

<sup>329</sup> V5/19/1/1.6; Manor of Northales court roll, 1386-1413, V5/19/2/1, SA.

<sup>330</sup> V5/19/1/1.14.

<sup>331</sup> Deed of lease and release, 1666, V5/19/3/2, SA.

Manors outside Easton likewise held parcels of land within the vill, interspersed with the Easton manorial lands. Of such land within the confines of the vill, three acres were granted to the Priory of Blythburgh by the de Bavent family in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century.<sup>332</sup> A terrier of the possessions of Blythburgh Priory of 1399-1400 lists four separate pieces of land and four tenements totalling 2 acres and ½ rood situated in the vill of 'Estone Bavent'.<sup>333</sup> At its dissolution in 1538 the reversion of Blythburgh Priory was sold to Sir Arthur Hopton, also the owner of various local Suffolk manors including that of Easton.<sup>334</sup> A rough account book of Robert Doonne, bailiff for Sir Arthur Hopton, listing rentals owing, records in 1557 four plots of land in Eston worth an 18d annual rental and are described as 'late lands belonging to the monastery of Bliborowe'.<sup>335</sup> A later rental of the possessions of the dissolved priory, dated 1582-1583, lists the majority of the north east Suffolk parishes (29 in total) where land was situated, all in one section. A further section described as 'a rentalle of the manor of Northalles Priorie parcel of the possessions of the late Priorie of Blythburgh' lists the possessions which have been assimilated into a 'manor' situated in Northales alias Covehithe, South Cove and Easton Bavents. Here, Arthur Hopton owned 34 plots of land including many tenements with an annual rental of £20s 12d, which previously had been the possessions of Blythburgh Priory. Adjacent to Easton in the parishes of Northales and South Cove, there were respectively 20 plots worth 7s 8d and 10 plots worth 12s 6d, whilst at Easton 4 plots were only worth 18d. Along with his holding of the manor of Easton with Empoles, Hopton ensured he controlled a large swathe of land and property in this small north-eastern corner of Suffolk.<sup>336</sup>

The manor of Southwold also had holdings within the vill of Easton. Dated between 1392-1396, a Southwold manorial rent roll records dues from nine inhabitants of Easton with payment made in herrings.<sup>337</sup> Cash amercements are recorded for two men and one woman under the heading of 'Easton', along with the name of the man swearing the capital pledge or tithing in a court roll dated 1456-57.<sup>338</sup> Rents are still assessed and paid in terms of herring in a copy rental dated to c1475-1499. There

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<sup>332</sup> Previously discussed in Chapter 2, see; Harper-Bill, *Cartulary Blythburgh Priory Two*, 148 (262, 264).

<sup>333</sup> Terrier of the Augustinian Priory of Blythburgh, Co. Suffolk, made by Prior Hetyngham, 1399-1400, Add MS 48381, 7v, BL.

<sup>334</sup> Arthur Hopton by 1538 also owned manors including Westleton, Westhall, Thorington, Blythburgh, Wissett and Wissett Roos and Yoxford.

<sup>335</sup> Account book of Doonne, 1553-1760, HA30/312/392, SA.

<sup>336</sup> Rental of the possessions of the dissolved Augustinian Priory of Blythburgh, co. Suff., 1582-1583, Add MS 48382, various, BL.

<sup>337</sup> Manor of Southwold, rent roll in herrings, 1392-1396, SC 12/15/19, TNA.

<sup>338</sup> Manor of Southwold, court roll, 1456-1457, SC 2/203/110, TNA.

are five separate holdings recorded under 'Eston bavent' with four paying in money but one, Childerhouse continues to pay his rent in herrings.<sup>339</sup>

An extant survey of the manor of Easton describes abuttals of its land lying against that of property held by the Earl Marshall. In 1431 the post of Earl Marshall was held by John de Mowbray, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Norfolk. However, if the survey was referring to the Earl Marshall in 1531, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk held the post, having acquired its reversion in 1523 from the king.<sup>340</sup> The dating of this survey is discussed later within this chapter and due to the associated complexities of dating it has not been possible to confirm the identify the manor associated with the Earl Marshall.

In 1687, a rental for 'the towne of Eson bavent' along with sums for the towns of 'Southould, Raydon and Northales' was included in two pages of culyer rents being collected for the manor of Reydon.<sup>341</sup> It has not been possible to locate any nominal information regarding the composition or tenants of this holding.

### **Manors of Borhed, Biskeles and Godell's gift to Southwold**

In May 1509 William Godell, the elder, a merchant of Southwold wrote his will, with death following soon after as the will was proven a month later in June. He bequeathed to his wife Margaret his place known as 'Skylman's', which upon her death then passed to the bailiffs and commonalty of Southwold with the stipulation that they find a secular priest to sing for his soul and those of his friends for the space of 16 years. Godell's success as a merchant was clearly evident from the range of other bequests contained within the will.<sup>342</sup> Today, the precise physical location of Skylman's gift to Southwold has been lost over time, certainly part of it included the common and marshes in Southwold itself, and various areas in the town retain and commemorate the name of 'Skilman'. Chancery case proceedings in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and other research indicates that the 'place' of Skylman's was spread over

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<sup>339</sup> This document is part of the Adair family collection of Flixton. Copy of rental for Southwold: including rents in herrings, c.1475-1499, 741/HA12/C11/10, SA.

<sup>340</sup> Stephen Gunn, *Charles Brandon, Henry VIII's Closest Friend* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2015), 86.

<sup>341</sup> Rental of the manor of Reydon, 1644-1691, HA11/C2/5, SA. The term Culyer probably derives from the term 'to cull' in the sense of to gather or collect. Thank you to David Butcher for this help with this enquiry. Hughes refers to it as 'an ancient yearly rent'. Edward Hughes, *The Equity Draftsman: Being a Selection of Forms of Pleading in Suits in Equity* (S. Brooke, Law Printing Office, 1828), 325.

<sup>342</sup> Bequests include - a priest to Rome to sing at 5 places, mass at Southwold church for 30 days after his death to include 12 poor men and women, a number of ships, fish out of Islond (Iceland), all his wool at Calais, 400 sheep, bequests to 20 local churches, monetary bequests of no less than £63. Will of William Godell, 1509, PROB 11/16/440, TNA.

various parishes including Easton Bavents and was the amalgamation of two earlier holdings (sometimes described as separate manors) known as Biskeless and Borched (also Byskeles, Borhead and variants).<sup>343</sup>

A rental of the manor of Southwold dated to the last quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, contained a holding called Skylman's, valued at 4,812 herring plus 39s 6d.<sup>344</sup> It was owned by Richard Skylman, another Southwold merchant and stockfishmonger with London mercantile links. The same holding, in an earlier rental of 1391-2, had been called 'Biskelees'.<sup>345</sup> Evidence of 'Biskeles' at an earlier date places both Henry de Biskeles and Sir Hubert de Bavent witnessing a quitclaim for property at Benacre c1270 indicating linkages between the two families.<sup>346</sup> In Easton, Richard Skilman held two acres of free land in two parcels, lying near the sea, adjacent to Gildenacre and a further acre of free land paid suit of court to Byskeles in Southwold.<sup>347</sup> Chancery proceedings dated between 1504-1515 record two cases being brought after the death of Richard Skylman, the elder, by his daughter and heir, Margaret and her husband Philip Blounte.<sup>348</sup> Under dispute are the 'messuage and land called 'Byskles' in Southwold, Reydon, Wangford, Easton, South Cove, and Walberswick' and 'the manor of 'Borched', and messuages and land in Walpole, Southwold, Reydon, Wangford, Easton, South Cove, and Walberswick'.<sup>349</sup> The defendants in both cases are a fishmonger and grocer of London, feoffees, which is suggestive that they had been appointed by Richard Skylman to oversee his estate at his death. A slightly later Chancery proceeding is subsequently brought against a Felicia Skylman described as the wife of the late Richard Skylman the younger, again by Margaret and Philip Blount, Margaret being sister to Richard, the younger.<sup>350</sup> Other co-defendants include one William Godell and under dispute are the deeds to a 'manor' called Skylman's in Southwold. This series of complex legal disputes is difficult to unravel but it is reasonable to deduce that Richard Skylman owned both Biskeles and Borhead before his death and by the time of the legal action against Felicia, by Margaret and her

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<sup>343</sup> Biskeleys, Borched and Skylman all recorded as manors. Chancery pleadings, various dates, C1/108/62, C1/288/42 and C1/1314/92-94, TNA.

<sup>344</sup> Copy rental of the manor of Southwold, c.1475-1499, 741/HA12/C11/10, SA.

<sup>345</sup> Bailiff's accounts, manor of Southwold, 1392, SC 6/1005/1, TNA.

<sup>346</sup> Quitclaim, c.1270, AMS 5592/111, East Sussex Record Office.

<sup>347</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531..

<sup>348</sup> Chancery pleadings, 1504-1515, C1/288/39 and C1/285/33, TNA.

<sup>349</sup> This listing of land at Walpole may answer the question of how Southwold came to own land at Walpole given to the Independent Chapel there. There are also possible connections with Sibton Abbey, This area of research warrants further investigation in the future. 'David Holmes Essay', Walpole Old Chapel, accessed 23 July 2024, <https://walpoleoldchapel.org/david-holmes-essay/>.

<sup>350</sup> Chancery pleadings, 1504-1515, C1/288/42, TNA.

husband, the property or manor was now known by the collective title of 'Skylmans'. At some point between the Chancery proceeding against Felicia (1504-1508?) and 1509, Godell acquired Skylmans. In his will, Goddell described Skylmans as 'my place with all the land, tenements, rents and services, conyver, hethis and merches, both free and copy with all their comodities and appurts thereto belonging'. The heaths and marshes would have supported the grazing of his 400 sheep.

### **Manorial lordship and administration, c.1275-1434**

In the thirteenth century the manor of Easton was held as part of the holdings of the de Bawent family (see Chapter 2). The court rolls do not record any evidence of the de Bavents after the Black Death of 1349, when it is presumed the male line died out at Easton Bavents and the de Argentein family, resident at Halesworth and lords of the manor of Northales, took over the administration of the manor.<sup>351</sup> It is possible that the manor passed into the hands of the Argentein family through marriage to a female de Bawent. The extant court rolls and accounts produced during the de Bavents lordship date from 1275 to c.1350. The rolls and accounts do not include any record of the other known local de Bawent family manorial holdings and no bailiff or seneschal is recorded, which would indicate the estate at Easton was being administered as a separate unit. In 1327, the tax paid by the vill of Easton, recorded in the Lay Subsidy returns, indicates a relatively poor and small settlement whose fortunes appear to change with the granting of the market charter to Thomas de Bawent in 1330 and with topographical changes occurring to the landscape around the haven opening up maritime economic opportunities.<sup>352</sup> It has been noted by Bailey that 'regions of weak manorialism often exhibit more symptoms of social and economic individualism, and higher levels of economic development'.<sup>353</sup> Easton certainly exhibited the trait of being held by a series of low-status landlords at this time but the extent of free tenure within the manor, which has been defined as another weak characteristic, cannot be calculated.<sup>354</sup> The 1356-1358 accounts are headed up as being compiled by 'Roger Godfrey the serjeant of Eston', with no manorial lord recorded, which differs from the earlier accounts for 1330-1350 where a reeve was

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<sup>351</sup> William de Bawent recorded in the accounts of 1349. A Thomas de Bawent is still recorded within the manor of Norton Bawents at Chediston in 1362. V5/19/1/1.3, SA; Copinger, *Manors of Suffolk, Blything*, 2:34.

<sup>352</sup> See Table 5.

<sup>353</sup> Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, 1:27.

<sup>354</sup> Bailey, 1:27; See fn.30.

elected from among the unfree tenantry. The position of serjeant was often held by a local free tenant of the manor who was paid a stipend or a remission of rent.<sup>355</sup> In the aftermath of the Black Death many manors were neglected and there are no extant accounts for the period 1358 to 1376 when the de Argentein's administered Easton in place of the de Bavents. In July and October 1361, another plague year in Suffolk, John de Argentein is listed as patron for Easton at the presentation of two rectors.<sup>356</sup>

Sir Richard Cossyn presented as patron in 1376 and in his will dated 1392 he recorded he was 'of Eston' and asked to be buried in the chancel of Easton church which indicated he lived within the vill.<sup>357</sup> During his ownership of the manor the accounts are compiled by a serjeant. After his death the manor passed into the control of the Shardelow family, with ultimately Ela Shardelow presenting as lady and being resident in the vill until 1431 when she moved from Easton to Cotton in mid Suffolk where the family held other manors.<sup>358</sup> Easton Bavents extant rolls produced under the lordship of the Shardelow family are bound together with rolls of other local manors they held, indicating that the manor was administered as part of a larger estate. As discussed earlier in this chapter, during the early part of the ownership of the manor of Easton, c.1392 under Robert de Shardelow, the suffix of 'with Empoles' was added to the manorial description. A survey of the manor was commissioned in 1431, the year that Ela Shardelow moved to Cotton, and presumably a value of the estate was required as the bailiff in place at Easton was occupied in paying off a debt of £16 which had been accrued by John de Shardelow, Ela's son.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> P D A Harvey, *Manorial Records*, vol. 5, Archives and the User (London: British Records Association, 1999), 6.

<sup>356</sup> Norwich Diocesan Institution Register (NDIR), Percy, 1355-1369, DN/Reg 2 bk 5, f.54. NRO.

<sup>357</sup> Cossyn's wife was named Dionisia, which was the name of Hubert de Bawent's wife and therefore it is possible that Dionisia may have been a de Bawent before marriage. Blomefield wrongly attributes Cossyn's place of residence to Easton in Norfolk. Francis Blomefield, *An Essay Towards A Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, vol. 2 (London: W. Miller, 1805), 395; NDIR, DN/Reg 3 bk 6, Despencer, 1370-1406, f.49, NRO. Appendix 1.

<sup>358</sup> The name has many variant spellings - Schardlow, Shardlow, Schardelow. Ela Shardelow also held Norton Bavents in Chediston, and manors named Schardelow were also held by the family at Little Barton, Cavenham, Cowling and Stradishall. Copinger, *Manors of Suffolk, Blything*, 2:34; Copinger, *The Manors of Suffolk, Notes on Their History and Devolution, The Hundreds of Hoxne, Lackford and Loes*, 4:138, 144; Walter Arthur Copinger, *The Manors of Suffolk, Notes on Their History and Devolution, The Hundreds of Lothingland and Mutford, Plomesgate and Risbridge*, vol. 5 (Manchester: Taylor, Garnett, Evans & Co Ltd, 1909), 208, 291.

<sup>359</sup> The survey of 1531 describes an area of the manor in 'which diverse houses once stood as by the survey renewed in June 1431'. Survey, c.1431-1531; Richmond, *John Hopton*, 80-81.

## Manorial lordship and administration, 1435-1555

Although she retained the rights to the manor of Easton, Ela leased it to John Hopton in 1435, when he acquired the reversion for 400 marks, until 1451 when she granted him the manor for an annual pension of 20 marks.<sup>360</sup> Although nationally there was an agrarian depression during middle decades of the fifteenth century, and the vill of Easton had received taxation allowances in 1449 due to its level of impoverishment, Hopton must have thought there was a profit to be made from his leasing the manor with its arable demesne.<sup>361</sup> The Hopton family association with Easton would last for approximately 200 years as it passed through the family and by the marriages of Dorothy Hopton through to the Roberds/Smith family and ultimately, for a while, under the control of Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey, her second husband.

John Hopton was a Yorkshire man, born at Swillington, near Leeds, who in 1430 inherited various estates in Yorkshire and Suffolk from Sir Roger Swillington, his father's half-brother. This inheritance was unexpected and resulted from a series of early deaths of other family members. The manors of Blythburgh and Walberswick, neighbours of Easton Bavents, were two of his main Suffolk properties, along with other nearby manors in Westleton, Yoxford, Westhall and Thorington. He added Easton Bavents to his portfolio in 1435 when he leased it from Ela Shadelow and had his main residence at Westwood at Blythburgh, although he purchased Cockfield Hall from Sir John Falstaff in 1440.<sup>362</sup> There are no extant account rolls for the period Hopton leased the manor but once he owned it outright, after Ela's death in 1457, his administration of the accounts by 1459-1460 can be traced to a local resident bailiff, John Wiseman. John Grymel followed Wiseman and was bailiff for Hopton for ten years between 1461-1471. Along with John Hoo, Grymel also leased the swannery on the Lords mere and was required to dredge the harbour when necessary, indicating that access was sometimes compromised due to periodic silting up.<sup>363</sup> Grymel was eventually dismissed in 1471 due to his mishandling of the payment of arrears of tenants dating back 13 years.<sup>364</sup> John Hopton was a wealthy man and the management of his estates, family and social life and his local social standing are the focus of an in depth work by Colin Richmond which provides valuable insights into the economic and social make-up of the manor of Easton Bavents for the period 1435

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<sup>360</sup> Ela died in 1457. Richmond, 78.

<sup>361</sup> Bailey, *The English Manor c.1200-c.1500*, 207.

<sup>362</sup> Richmond, *John Hopton*, 26.

<sup>363</sup> Richmond, 88.

<sup>364</sup> Tenants lately of John Nottingham were 13 years in arrears and John Childerous was 4 years in arrears. Richmond, 92.

until his death in 1478.<sup>365</sup> Hopton is described as a man who was 'amply satisfied by his windfall in 1430' and who 'did not seek his fortune ...and any ambition as he did have was for his children'.<sup>366</sup> By the end of his life he was further described as 'wealthy, enterprising, sensible and responsible', having provided for his eldest daughter, purchased Cockfield Hall and Easton, expanded his demesne estates at Blythburgh and elsewhere and provided good educations for his sons.<sup>367</sup> During the period of his ownership of the manor, the vill of Easton witnessed an increase in both its population and in its economic position, as evidenced in Chapter 4. Perhaps Hopton was much more astute commercially than Richmond's description of 'a safe pair of hands' gives credit.

A small sampling of Easton Bavents manorial court rolls for the period of the 1450s provides unequivocal evidence of a buoyant and bustling community which runs counter to what would have been expected within a 'rural' manor of this date.<sup>368</sup> Most rural manors in East Anglia reveal signs of demographic decline and economic decay in the second half of the fifteenth century with untenanted villein holdings and presentments for wastage.<sup>369</sup> None of these were being recorded at Easton. In direct contrast, property at Easton appears to have been sought after, judging by the willingness of one Simon Fiske of Laxfield, who in 1450, acquired a messuage with a garden and curtilage in Easton, although he does not appear to have lived there regularly. In his will of 1447, Richard Clubbard asked for his executors to 'sell his new house' and in 1459 a parcel of demesne land was granted for the building of a new house next to the South Hethe.<sup>370</sup> Public order presentments to the Easton leet court are more characteristic of an urban rather than a rural setting. These include Agnes Brygg, presented for being a 'common keeper of an illicit hostel of suspect and riotous people by night' and then later Robert Brygg '*leprosa infirmitate*' [weakened by leprosy?] fined 6s 8d for 'he keeps a common hostel for eating and drinking with many unknown and illicit people'. In 1452 'Nicholas Berebrewer' and 'Hugo Berebrewer' were both amerced for 12d for breaking the assize. The brewing of beer, as opposed to traditionally produced ale, was strongly associated with ports with 'Dutch'

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<sup>365</sup> Richmond, *John Hopton*; For further discussion regarding the Hopton family, see also, Robert Parr, *Yoxford Yesterday*, vol. 1 & 2 (Unpublished typescript, n.d.).

<sup>366</sup> Richmond, *John Hopton*, 29.

<sup>367</sup> Richmond, 258.

<sup>368</sup> Manorial court roll, NRA 17140 Russell, Box 493/10.

<sup>369</sup> Mark Bailey, *A Marginal Economy? : East Anglian Breckland in the Later Middle Ages*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought: 4th Ser., 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 309–17; Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, 1:230–40.

<sup>370</sup> Appendix 1.

connections as was locally evident at Walberswick, where in 1440, 'Dutchman' Adrian Berebrewer was listed.<sup>371</sup> Alien beer brewers in fifteenth century England were 'few, but prosperous and powerful' and were recorded in the alien subsides in locations which catered for the 'Dutch presence'.<sup>372</sup>

The importance of maritime trade and the influx of immigrants to Easton can be revealed through a brief reconstruction of the backgrounds of key figures appearing in the manorial court. See **Table 13** which presents all the jurors, capital pledges and essoins in the Easter court session of 1485, a date when Easton's population and economic growth appears to be reaching or is at its zenith. This data is then supplemented with either occupational or nationality information derived from other sources.

This reconstruction of the backgrounds of the leading figures in the manor court in the mid-1480s reveals the importance of maritime and fishing exploits and also a substantial influx of aliens. Of the 28 identifiable males in the sample direct evidence of involvement in maritime occupations can be seen in 60% of the cases. If nominal linkage is taken into consideration, and the fact that 'alien servants' recorded in the households of mariners are assumed to be crewmen, then this figure rises to 78%. The majority are listed as 'mariners' as opposed to 'fishermen', particularly those located within the Common Plea 40 indices (CP40), even though the term fisherman can be found for other coastal locations.<sup>373</sup> This would point to an emphasis on trade rather than fishing, although in many cases both elements can be witnessed, meaning that the vessels being operated out of Easton were connected to both operations. Two of the men in 1485 are later listed as masters on vessels which are also listed as 'of Easton' at the Port of London, laden with wool, heading for the Staple at Calais.<sup>374</sup> Only two other occupations are specifically listed, Thomas Bosham was recorded as a miller in his will proven in 1494 and John Childerous was given as a yeoman and a husbandman when he appeared before the Common Plea courts in 1490 and 1498.<sup>375</sup> Agrarian pursuits would have been carried on at certain times of the year by the mariners and more importantly by their wives, children and older dependants but in 1485 Easton Bavents was not a community dedicated to and reliant upon agriculture.

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<sup>371</sup> Alien subsidy, 1440, E179/180/92, pt 2, m.12, TNA.

<sup>372</sup> Ormrod, Lambert, and Mackman, *Immigrant England, 1300-1550*, 137-39.

<sup>373</sup> See Table 13 for further background information regarding the Common Plea rolls (CP40) indices.

<sup>374</sup> See Table 13 for refs.

<sup>375</sup> Appendix 1; see Table 16 for CP40 refs.

The nationality of those men listed, both on the court roll in 1485 and on the Alien Subsidies, was also noted in **Table 13** and they constitute 32% of the total. When compared with the 22 men who have maritime and fishing connections this figure rises to 40%. This high percentage of men from the Low Countries including Zeeland and Brabant and from elsewhere must have impacted upon Easton and have been instrumental in its dramatic economic increase during the period of John Hopton's lordship.<sup>376</sup>

Thomas Hopton, the second son of John, inherited the manor of Easton Bavents in 1478, but only lived until 1486 and was childless. His elder brother William had died in 1484, therefore the manor passed to William's son Sir George Hopton who survived a further five years before dying in 1489, leaving George's wife Dame Anne Hopton, guardian for their young sons John and Arthur. John Hopton died in 1490 leaving his younger brother Arthur as sole heir. The survival of court rolls and accounts for the period 1485 to 1525 is scant and no accounts have survived post 1481. One year of estreats for 1505-6 have survived and provide a brief glimpse of community life in Easton Bavents at this date.<sup>377</sup> Fines were handed out to Magnus [blank] and Alice his wife for keeping an illicit and riotous house at nighttime, to John Butte for casting muck on the Kings highway and to John Cornelice for doing hurt with his horse to his neighbour. Two other accounts of fines levied for persons not clearing or scoring their dykes lying adjacent to Easton Common indicated problems with block water courses were recognised and that flooding could result from such actions. There were lengthy Star Chamber proceedings between Arthur Hopton's stepfather and those trusted with his wardship, and it took until 1521 before Arthur Hopton had taken control of his estates and was noted as patron at the presentation of James Corton to the church of Easton.<sup>378</sup>

Sir Arthur Hopton's principal residence was at Westwood, Blythburgh and he was knighted c.1513. He married twice, his second wife being Anne (the daughter of Sir Davy Owen, a natural son of Owen Tudor) with whom he had nine or ten children. Sir Arthur, although mainly resident in Suffolk, held both national and local positions and was appointed for life to the Commission for the Peace for Suffolk. He was also

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<sup>376</sup> See Chapter 6 for further in-depth research into Easton's maritime economy.

<sup>377</sup> Estreats, bound with Westhall manor rolls, 1505-6, HA30/50/22/20.9 (13), SA.

<sup>378</sup> Sir Robert Curson and Anne his wife: Sir Robert Clere and William Eyre: The manor of Westleton, & elsewhere, estate of Arthur Hopton, a ward, c.1509-1547, STAC 2/17/336, STAC 2/9/f.241, STAC 2/10/f.48-49, TNA; NDIR, Nykke, 1505-1535, DN/Reg 9 bk 14, f.171, NRO.

involved in suppressing the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536.<sup>379</sup> Sir Arthur and his son Sir Owen, who succeeded to the lordship, both pursued political careers rather than concentrating on developing their Suffolk estates. At nearby Walberswick and Blythburgh, where Sir Arthur held the manors, there is evidence that he required cash in the early sixteenth century as large swathes of demesne land and sheep fold courses were leased out to local men.<sup>380</sup> It was during this period, in 1531, that the Easton Bavents survey was renewed and although not specifically stated, it was probably commissioned for valuing the demesne lands in regard to their leasing or farming out in line with the land at Blythburgh and Walberswick. James Sponer, a merchant of Easton, was listed in the survey as farmer of the manor.<sup>381</sup> Edmond Franklin of Easton, in his will written in 1553, wrote 'I will that my father Willm Francklinge and Richard Franclng shall have the profits of my lease of the manor of Eston during the liffe natural of my Mr Sir Arthur Hopton knight', further evidence that the manor was being farmed out.<sup>382</sup> The manor passed from Arthur to his son Sir Owen Hopton upon his death in 1555.

A further examination of the names of those presenting as juror, capital pledges and essoins in a manor court held in 1532 reveals subtle changes to the occupational trends and nationality data to that of the 1480s (**Table 14**).

There are twenty-three names listed, but only sixteen of the men can be further identified with additional biographical information. Of these sixteen, 38% had a direct linkage with fishing through the bequests of nets or boats. 44% had a linkage with fishing and/or coastal trading through their involvement as jurors at the Admiralty Court held 1536-7. For the year 1536-37 a record survives of the local Admiralty Courts held in Norfolk and Suffolk dealing with cases of prize and instance.<sup>383</sup> Local mariners made up the juries at the specific courts. As listed fifty years earlier, two men had ties to vessels sailing from London to Calais transporting wool and other goods, but in 1532-3 these links were now ten years old, none of the men had contemporaneous links with the capital. The proportion of 'alien' incomers who were

<sup>379</sup> 'Hopton, Sir Arthur (1488-1555), of Yoxford, Suffolk', History of Parliament Online, accessed 23 July 2024, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/hopton-sir-arthur-1488-1555>.

<sup>380</sup> Peter Warner, *Bloody Marsh: A Seventeenth-Century Village in Crisis* (Macclesfield: Windgather Press, 2000), 8.

<sup>381</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531.

<sup>382</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>383</sup> Prize refers to cases of disputed cargo found ashore or at sea and Instance refers to commercial disputes such as collisions. Proceedings before the Vice Admiral of Norfolk and Suffolk, 1536-7, HCA13/1, TNA. Thanks to Craig Lambert for access to his complete digital files of this volume.

listed as taking part within the court procedures had dropped to only 6% (one man – Cornelious Lawson). Hence a brief comparison of the backgrounds of the leading court figures between 1485 and 1532 shows a decline in both the proportion of people engaged in maritime activities and of aliens. Furthermore, the court records reveal other signs of decay. A Symon Ffyske of Laxfield, a descendant of the Simon who actively purchased land at Easton in 1450, was distrained to answer for allowing his free tenement to become ruinous and wasted. He was not appearing at court to provide answers. Four others were also distrained, with their tenements described as 'decayed'. Three had old links with the capital and had not appeared to answer the court, [blank] Basse and Joan Cutter were given as of London; Richard Cooke, had died in 1495 and wrote his will whilst 'in London' describing himself as a mariner.<sup>384</sup>

By the 1530s Easton had started to witness the decline in its population and its economic position, which becomes clearer by 1568 when the 1524 and 1568 Lay Subsidies are compared.<sup>385</sup> Land and property in Easton Bavents are no longer being sought after by incomers, maritime mercantile connections with London have faded and the cosmopolitan make-up of the population has significantly dropped.

### Dating the 1531 survey

The only extant survey of the manor Easton Bavents is catalogued as and dated to 1531. The document describes itself in the opening paragraph as an 'extent of the same place (Eston Bavent) renewed September of the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of the reign of Henry VIII'.<sup>386</sup> A different hand has added the description 'Survey of the Manor of Eston Bavent 23.H.8', with further additional text, to the left margin of the document.<sup>387</sup> A survey or extent is a document which should provide information regarding manorial assets and a benchmark for assessing the potential yields of the manor.<sup>388</sup> As discussed earlier in Chapter 1, it was anticipated that this survey would be a major source of topographical information, land use and nominal tenurial data for 1531. With

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<sup>384</sup> Manorial Court roll, 1532-33, Box793/Roll 13, m.3, BA; Appendix 1.

<sup>385</sup> See Table 7 and Chapter 4.

<sup>386</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531.

<sup>387</sup> The text 'Com. Suffolk C.C.Bun 1. No 7.' has also been added. This annotation and numbering are found on the Easton Bavents manorial documents held at Suffolk Archives and at Bedfordshire Archives and relate to documents presented in at a Chancery court case, probably brought by the Gooch family when they purchased the manor c.1733.

<sup>388</sup> Bailey, *The English Manor c.1200-c.1500*, 18. For further discussions regarding the composition of surveys and extents see; Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 5:15–24; Bailey, *The English Manor c.1200-c.1500*, 21–95; Denis Stuart, *Manorial Records, An Introduction To Their Transcription and Translation* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1992), 43–68.

complex details of abuttals, it was expected to be a very informative source about the lost landscape and layout of the vill, parish and manor of Easton. Closer inspection of the archival diplomatic of the document, alongside a full transcription and translation, has revealed that the survey is incomplete, and the information contained within it dates from c.1431 to 1531.<sup>389</sup> Surveys were written as lasting records and used as reference tools by administrators over many years. They were often brought up to date by being copied and a wholesale revision applied or as it appears in the case of this survey, annotations were made to parts of the text.<sup>390</sup> See Appendix 3 for a listing of the survey contents.

The survey has no cover and is written on paper watermarked with a contemporary (to 1531) mark of a hand with a five-pointed star extending from an elongated finger. It consists of a single section of 5 sheets of paper, sewn with thread on the central fold, providing 20 pages, although only 19 contain writing. The text on the verse of the last page ends in mid-sentence, one indication that the survey is not complete. It is feasible that another part of the survey existed at some point on another section and that the whole was contained within a vellum cover. The survey has been written in a later 'Tudor' hand with a discernible difference in the handwriting on pages 18-20. This could be due to a different hand or possibly a new pen nib. The court rolls continue to refer to the manor of Easton Bavents with Empols c.1531, but Empoles is not mentioned at all within the survey which is further proof that it is not complete.

In the early sixteenth century, a manorial survey was rarely drawn up by a single surveyor, it was more usual for it to be the work of a committee, made up of a group of local tenants, and in post-medieval surveys it was closely associated with the workings of the manorial court.<sup>391</sup> The Easton Bavents survey begins with the names of twelve men who are all described as 'tenants of the same place' and the information they supply is noted as being supplied 'on oath'.<sup>392</sup> Cross referencing the names of the twelve men with the names of the chief pledges and jurors listed on the manorial court roll for 1531-32 and the listings of 1524 lay tax subsidy for Easton Bavents confirms that these twelve men were of senior standing within the vill of Easton, (**Table 15**). James Sponer is noted as 'farmer' of the manor within the survey.<sup>393</sup> Three out of four of the highest taxpayers in Easton in 1524, James Sponer, Thomas

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<sup>389</sup> The survey was transcribed and translated by Louise Kennedy, 2021 with corrections by Mark Bailey.

<sup>390</sup> Harvey, *Manorial Records*, 5:15.

<sup>391</sup> Harvey, 5:15.

<sup>392</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531, f.1.

<sup>393</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531, f.2.

Blomfeld and Cornelis Lawson (all assessed on £20 of goods) are listed on the survey.<sup>394</sup> All three of the above have close associations with maritime trading and fishing and will be discussed more fully in Chapter 6.

The next paragraph of the survey states that the manor is 'held in Chief by the Duke of Norfolk and his Castle of Framlingham for the service of half one knight's fee, with the manor of Chediston'. In early medieval times the knight's fee related to a manor which held land in trust from a superior lord in return for the provision of one knight (or portion of) for military service when required.<sup>395</sup> Inquisitions Post Mortem for Roger Bigod, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Norfolk, 1306 and Thomas Moubray, Duke of Norfolk, 1399 both record the de Bavent family holding one whole knight's fee for the combined manors of Easton Bavents and Chediston.<sup>396</sup> By 1531 this legal construct was an archaic reference but the term is followed in the survey by a further description, 'know the site of the manor contains in circumference 5 acres within which diverse houses lately built as by the survey renewed June in the 9<sup>th</sup> of Henry VI (1431) which now are wasted/devastated through lack of repair'.<sup>397</sup>

The mention of a previous survey in 1431 is of immense importance in the dating of the document. Also described as a 'renewed' survey in 1431, it becomes apparent that the majority of the nominal tenant entries in the survey can be dated from this period and are not contemporaneous with 1531.<sup>398</sup> The liberties and customs of the manor are then laid out, which is standard. The lord of the manor had the right as patron to appoint clergy to the benefice and was to hold his leet once a year. The value of fines for breaches of the assize of bread and ale along with amercement payments from the leet court are estimated as 6s 8d. The Lord also had the liberty of bull and liberty of boar, meaning that the Lord had the rights to the manure produced by the grazing of these animals within the manor.<sup>399</sup> The lord's court was to be held once every three weeks.

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<sup>394</sup> Raff Russell, listed in 1524 on £20 of goods has died by 1528 when his widow is mentioned in the will of Downey Bek of Easton Bavents. Appendix 1.

<sup>395</sup> Bailey, *The English Manor c.1200-c.1500*, 14.

<sup>396</sup> 'Inquisitions Post Mortem, Edward I, File 127', British History Online, 290–310, accessed 20 August 2024, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/vol4/pp290-310>; 'Inquisitions Post Mortem, Henry IV, Entries 264-305', British History Online, 78–95, accessed 20 August 2024, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/vol18/pp78-95>.

<sup>397</sup> The Latin term 'devastant' is an obscure term and has been translated as wasted but could possibly mean devastated.

<sup>398</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531, f.1.

<sup>399</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531, f.1.

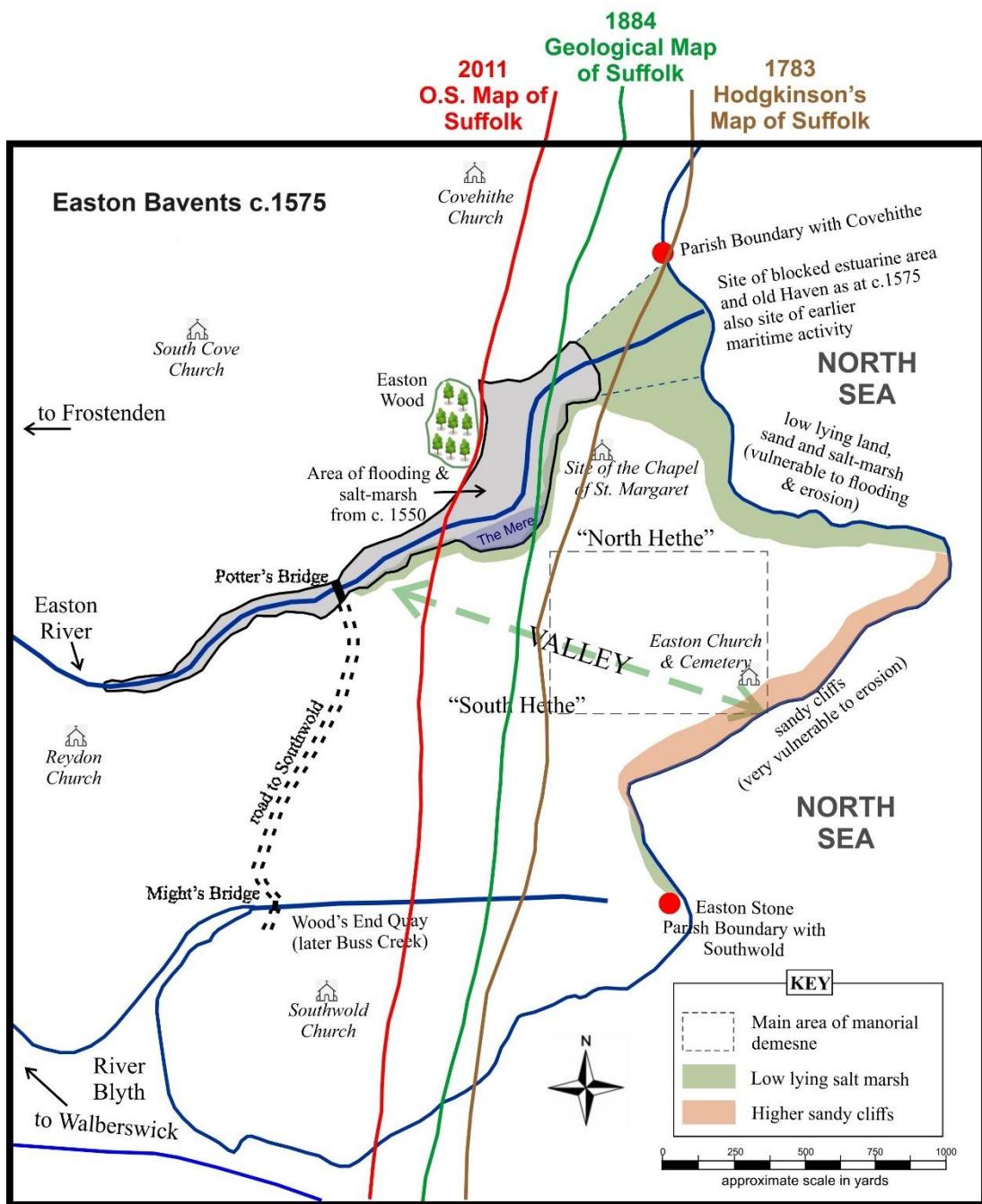
A left-hand marginal note on folio 3 indicates the start of a section detailing 'Closes and Pightles'. Folios 3-8 describe thirty separate parcels of property and land totalling 429 acres, 11 roods and 26 ½ perches in size. Folio 9 has a left marginal heading of 'Free tenants of the fee of the manor of Eston bavent'. Folios 9-20 then describe a further seventy-five parcels of free land and property totalling another 67 acres and 1 ½ roods.

Following a close investigation of the text, it is stated here that the 1431 (renewed) survey was copied out in 1531 by a scribe and certain amendments to the nominal information contained were added as inserts on folios 3-6, 11 and 17. The inserted amendments take the form of updated landholders and tenants names; all either the men listed as 'on oath', in the hands of the Lord or the Rector, and in just two cases, there are alterations of the direction of abuttals. Information regarding the state of devastation of the 'diverse houses' plus a further three plots of land are also taken to be 1531 amendments. The survey lists forty-five separate names of land holders and tenants, including those twelve swearing on oath as tenants of Easton and two of their wives. A comparison of the remaining thirty-one names with those on a spreadsheet of research findings compiled for this thesis produces evidence that twenty-seven can be dated to the period 1431-1437 and are therefore not contemporary to 1531 but are earlier land owners and tenants. Caution therefore must be exercised in dating the information of landholders and tenants contained within the 1531 survey apart from those entries which have obviously been amended.

### **Topography of the c.1431-1531 survey**

Although not complete and with dating difficulties, the 1531 manorial survey does provide evidential information allowing the placement of certain topographical features to be determined with a degree of accuracy. Figure 22 presents a visual representation of Easton Bavents in c.1575 with certain features described within the c.1431-1531 survey.

Figure 22 – A visualisation of Easton Bavents, c.1575, with projected coastlines, 1783, 1884 and 2011



Source – Plan drawn by Ivan Bunn, 2024. Based on drawing provided by Louise Kennedy, based on 1531 manorial survey; Chart of East Anglia and Dutch coast, Y/C 37/2, NRO; Hodgkinson's map of Suffolk, 1783; Geological map of Suffolk, 1884; Ordnance Survey map of Suffolk, 2011 and other sources.

One of the most important pieces of evidence is the confirmation of a 'haven between Coveheth and Eston Baven'.<sup>400</sup> This pinpoints the location of the haven as on the Easton river where it flowed out to the North Sea, at the northern extremity of the vill with Covehithe lying across the expanse of water. The Lords mere and the chapel of

<sup>400</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531, f.7.

St Margaret are also described in this northern vicinity with the sea lying to their east.<sup>401</sup> The Lord's mere was a clearly distinct area from the haven. The manorial accounts mention 'le Haven', which was explicitly associated with the sea and attracted larger ships, and the marsh or mere ('*marra domini*') where reeds were cut and small boats moored for the winter.<sup>402</sup> The later survey describes Boldesmere, a marsh adjacent to the mere north of the demesne. Hence it is probable that the meres were distinct and shallower salt marshes formed at meandering points of the Easton river to the west of the haven. The ecclesiastical institutions of the vill, the church of St Nicholas, the rectory and the cemetery are all mentioned within the survey, but their location is more difficult to pinpoint. The cemetery and the rectory are described in connection with land of Matilda Lump 'lying in one quarentena between the rectory and the sea next to the church cemetery on the south part'.<sup>403</sup> This indicates that all these institutions were lying relatively near to each other and not too far from the sea. In 1431-2 the church was described as opposite 'le Southethe with le Clyffe', which locates it at the southern extremity of the Northethe. As discussed in Chapter 2 the small ancient tributary valley with its associated 'cliffs' lying between the north and south heaths must have provided a natural division between the two areas of heath and pasture land stretching eastwards towards the sea. Another reference in the survey links the church with a road running from it to the vill of Reydon. These snippets of information place the parish church to the south of the haven and chapel of St Margaret, towards the east of the older community located around the main area of manorial demesne.

Richmond provides manorial evidence for the early 1400s of the Manor House and associated home farm being occupied by Ela Shardlow, the manorial holder.<sup>404</sup> In 1531, the manorial Halle Close and its associated land called Kychencroft, Osgotpyghtle and Fennepyghtell are described as lying in the north part of the manor, close to the common marsh and the mere. Both Osgotpyghtle and Fennepyghtle are areas of arable enclosures, within open strip fields, listed earlier in the 1356-7 accounts. There is no building described as the 'manor house' and there is no evidence that any of the manorial lords after Ela Shardelow were resident at Easton Bavents. The manorial demesne is listed in 22 parcels of land and totals 209 acres 3 roods 26.5 perches. 74 acres of this is described as *frisca*, denoting uncultivated

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<sup>401</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531, f.7.

<sup>402</sup> Manorial accounts, 1395, V5/19/1/1.10.,

<sup>403</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531, f.14. Bailey describes a quarentena as the East Anglian word for furlong, which is a subdivision of open arable fields. Bailey, *The English Manor c.1200-c.1500*, 243, 245.

<sup>404</sup> Richmond, John Hopton, 79.

arable land which has not been ploughed for at least a year and therefore has reverted to waste. Another 28 acres is described as lying vacant and in the hands of the lord and a further 15 acres described as 'devastated' with 7 acres devastated by the sea. The demesne is not being exploited for grain intensively in 1531 and only 21 acres is rented out to 5 tenants. No further information is provided for the tenure of the remainder. In 1531, with over 56% of the manorial demesne lying *frisca*, vacant or devastated, it was evidently in decline.

The 1343-44 manorial account mentions the North and South Hethes, which were evidently extensive areas of heathlands providing pasture for animals, mainly sheep, including the lord's flock.<sup>405</sup> A change of use has occurred by 1431-2 when a rabbit warren is described as 'the warren called le Southethe with le Clyffe opposite the church there'.<sup>406</sup> In 1531, only the North Hethe is described, as 'several pastures for the sheep of the lord' bounded by the chapel of St Margaret the Virgin and the haven between Covehithe and Easton, locating it in the north of the manor.<sup>407</sup> The 74 acres of uncultivated arable land (frisc) are described as 'lying upon the way which leads to the chapel of St Margaret and the old rabbit warren that was formerly assigned to the pasture of the sheep of the lord there'. No reference to South Hethe or any abuttal is made in 1531.<sup>408</sup>

Under the closes and pightles section of the survey no associated dwellings are recorded. However, seventeen dwellings are listed under the free tenants' section, comprising five tenements, four messuages, three curtilages, three cottages and two tofts. Whilst the free tenants are named there are no references to any subletting or subdivision of these dwellings. Three of these free dwellings are named. Two other customary tenements called Blotold and Gosemere, are described in the abuttals. It is also noted that John Pope has built a house on free land which appears to have been erected after the 1431 survey and is described as abutting King's Way to the west. Of the other free dwellings listed, fifteen of them all abut to the King's Way to the west and by further nominal linkage of the tenants and abuttals it has been possible to determine that the dwellings and therefore the King's Way ran in a north-south direction. The final two free dwellings, the tofts, lay in the Lords Close and at

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<sup>405</sup> V5/19/1/1.2.

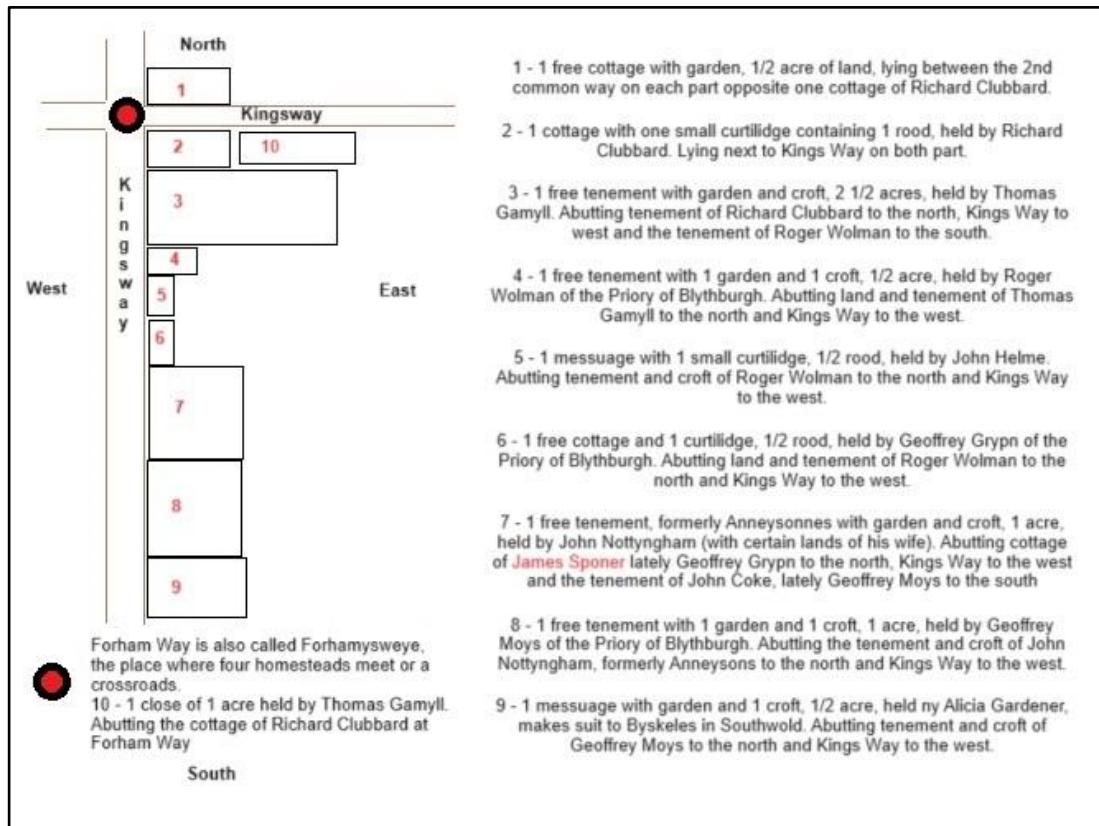
<sup>406</sup> V5/19/1/1.13.

<sup>407</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531, f.8.

<sup>408</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531, f.4.

the west end of the manor. Figure 23 is a diagrammatic plan of a section of Kings Way listing its abutments.

**Figure 23 – Plan of ten properties abutting Kingsway, c.1431**



Note – Plot no.7 has the name of James Sponer mentioned in the abutments. James Sponer dates from c.1531.

Source – Survey c.1431-1531, Feoffment of a piece of land in Easton, 889/3, 1491, SA.

The survey lists a total of 67 acres and 1/2 rood of free land with dwellings held by a total of 20 free tenants with their rent payable and services due to the lord described as 'scutage' (in lieu of military service), suit of court (requirement to appear at the general court baron) with some of the free rent payable to Blythburgh priory and rent of assize to the prior of Blythburgh priory. All the free tenants' names listed in the survey can be dated to c.1431, so the accuracy and status of the free lands in 1531 cannot be relied upon. Three tenants of the demesne land in 1531, Sponer, Pyeres and Lee were certainly residents of Easton at that time, whilst the two others, Dene and Gardener date from c.1431. The 1531 survey is therefore a mixture of updated and outdated information about the tenantry.

A comparison of a possible twenty-one dwellings listed in the survey against the base number of sixty persons listed in 1524 in the Lay Subsidy reveals a potentially large

disparity. It is impossible to gauge the element of sub-division and sub-letting of these properties, likewise it is not possible to identify all of those who were live-in servants in 1524. It is therefore frustrating, but impossible to deduce how many customary dwellings are missing from the 1531 survey.

Of the seventy-six parcels of free land described, thirty-four are under one acre in size, indicating that small strip areas are being farmed, however it must be remembered that nominally this information dates to 1431. The majority of these strips lay in a quarentena called Lumpswell located somewhere between the rectory and the sea.

Within the survey, land and property are described as either common, demesne, customary and free, plus one area, the North Hethe, which is described as 'not subject to common rights'.<sup>409</sup> Common land, that which fell outside the demesne and was not held by any particular tenant, is only mentioned in abuttals and is described as 'a common marsh' and 'a common pasture'. There are references to customary land as abuttals, but no description or listing of customary land held from the manor is included within the survey. Finally, some of the abuttals and parcels of land can be connected as part of a process of reconstructing the landscape but many do not connect to other descriptions of parcels of land, presumably because they abut on land of other manors, or on customary holdings that are not described, and as these are effectively standalone parcels they cannot be accurately located within the vill.

A place called Skotlondrowe is mentioned in the survey in relation to a footpath leading from 'Blowters Hill to Skotlondrowe' lying in the north of the manor as the vill is described lying to the south of it.<sup>410</sup> The accounts in 1429-30 list the first record of an assize rent of one tenement called Skotlondrowe, with later accounts referring to it as Skotlondgrove.<sup>411</sup> With a separate entry under the assize section of the rents it means that this tenement was not part of the original assize rent and it implies that the rental figure due of 6s 8d (half a mark) was an additional cash rent for a new property in 1429-30. A deed of 1568 later describes it as 'one close with appurtenances... known by the name Skotland Close'.<sup>412</sup> The use of the name Skot within a place or field name can be ambiguous. It has been interpreted as land subject

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<sup>409</sup> Whittle says that 'in its classic form the manor contained four types of land: common, demesne, customary (bond, customary and copyhold) and free. Whittle, *Development of Agrarian Capitalism*, 30.

<sup>410</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531, f.16.

<sup>411</sup> V5/19/1/1.12; V5/19/1/1.14-16.

<sup>412</sup> Deed to lead to the use of a fine, 1568, HA30/312/33, SA.

to a payment of some tax or ‘scot’, but remoteness within a locality has also been suggested as its source.<sup>413</sup>

As would be expected, many of the named pieces of land provide descriptors of use or physical features. As noted by Dymond, in medieval and early modern times, the English farming landscape was intricately named, and the names can yield previously unknown history.<sup>414</sup> There is Palfrey land (horses), Gildenacre (parish guild association or fertile land), Longacre (a thin strip of land), Parsons (glebe land) and Waxland (fruitful land or possibly connected with bees).<sup>415</sup> Alongside Blowters Hill mentioned above there is another higher area called Bromehill, lying near the Lords mere. Bromehill is fairly obvious as a hill with brome growing upon it and Blowters Hill may have been connected with an area of higher ground used for the drying of fish. A field called Callowdon, which lay in the Upper Quarentena (there was also a Lower Quarentena), was also on higher ground. Calow derives from the term *calu* meaning a bald or bare hill area.<sup>416</sup> Lumpswell and Robynswell combine both a nominal descriptor and evidence of a spring.<sup>417</sup> With the ancient river valley situated between the North and South Heaths it is credible that the freshwater springs and both the Upper and Lower Quarentena’s were in this area.

Criss crossing the landscape at Easton a total of fifteen different descriptions of ‘way’ are recorded, including Kingsway, Millway (also Mylleway), Churchway, and Forham Way. Other ‘ways’ record landscape features which are connected by the route, e.g., ‘the common way leading from the sea to the vill’. It is probable that some of the fifteen ways are describing the same path especially where just ‘common way’ or ‘second common way’ have been used. Two footpaths are also listed denoting smaller, less trodden paths. The use of Forham Way (also Forhamysweye), located in the vicinity of two other ‘ways’ appears to place it as a crossroads or the place where four homesteads meet.<sup>418</sup> These details reveal that the vill of Easton was connected by road to Reydon to the west but there are no references to ways leading to Northales or Southwold. This is significant, because it confirms that stretches of water prevented direct access between Easton and both vills. Overland access to Northales would have been possible via Potters Bridge across the Easton river which lies on the

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<sup>413</sup> John Field, *A History of English Field-Names* (Harlow: Longman Group, 1993), 152.

<sup>414</sup> David Dymond, ‘Minor Place-Names In Suffolk’, *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* 44, no. 4 (2020): 613.

<sup>415</sup> Field, *A History of English Field-Names*, 120, 188, 254.

<sup>416</sup> Gelling and Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names*, 129.

<sup>417</sup> Gelling and Cole, 31–35.

<sup>418</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531, f.10; Feoffment of a piece of land in Easton, 1491, 889/3, SA.

marshland at the junction of the vills of Reydon, South Cove and Easton Bavents and was a vital link for overland transport to Beccles and Yarmouth to the north.<sup>419</sup> In 1583, land at South Cove is described as 'abuttethe upon Kynges waye derect and nyghe potters bregg towards ye southe' confirming that Kings Way led out of South Cove over Potters Bridge.<sup>420</sup> Access to Southwold, across Woodsends, later Buss Creek to the west would have been at what is now called Might's Bridge. In the early 1470s will bequests were being made to 'the great bridge' over Buss Creek, Southwold where Might's Bridge is now situated.<sup>421</sup>

The Millway mentioned above, led from the 'mound of the windmill' to the common marsh indicating that a windmill was no longer standing.<sup>422</sup> The earlier manorial accounts prior to 1357 provide evidence of operating windmills owned by the manor at Easton and at Northales.<sup>423</sup> By the late 1450s there are indications that at least one of the mills was not in use as a court roll entry recorded that one 'John Gardner (was) given days to restore the church way lately called Melleway'.<sup>424</sup> A windmill was operational at Easton during the period c.1479-c1574 as references within litigation, at the court of Chancery, at the court of Common Pleas and in will bequests, specifically detail a windmill at Easton.<sup>425</sup>

Finally for the 1531 survey, it should be stated that there are no nominal references specifically to the land mass extending into the north sea, known from maps and navigational charts as Easton Ness.

### **Manorial lordship and administration, 1556-c.1650**

In 1568 a deed was drawn up between Sir Owen Hopton of Yoxford and his son and heir Arthur Hopton on one part and Owen and William Tasborough of Flixton and

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<sup>419</sup> Judith Middleton-Stewart, 'Charity Begins at Home: Housing and Highways in Late Medieval Suffolk', in *East Anglian Studies, Essays Presented to J. C. Barringer On His Retirement, August 30 1995, University of East Anglia, Norwich*, ed. Adam Longcroft and Richard Joby (Norwich: Marwood, 1995), 195.

<sup>420</sup> Rental of the possessions of the dissolved Augustinian Priory of Blyburgh, co. Suff., 1582-1583, Add MS 48382, BL.

<sup>421</sup> Middleton-Stewart, 'Charity Begins at Home', 195.

<sup>422</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531, f.5.

<sup>423</sup> V5/19/1/1.1, 1.3 and 1.4.

<sup>424</sup> Court roll, 1459-1485, Box 493/10, BA.

<sup>425</sup> Will of John Haltway of Wangford, IC/500/1/24E, 1479, SA; Detention of deeds re mill and land in Easton Bavents, C 1/157/44, 1486-1493 or 1504-1515, TNA; Debt case re William Chery, miller, see 'CP40 Indices', University of Houston, O'Quinn Law Library, CP40/951, 1500, f.522, accessed 25 July 2024, [http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices/CP40Indices/CP40\\_Indices.html](http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices/CP40Indices/CP40_Indices.html); Appendix 1.

Furnivalls Inn respectively on the other part providing a description of the manor of Easton Bavents and Empoles.<sup>426</sup>

Within this deed, four separate descriptions of land and property are laid out detailing what exactly is being devised for a charge of £400. The main manor is described as 'the manor of Eston Bavent with theadvowson of the church withal there appurtenances in Eston Bavent, Reydon and Northales, Southwold and elsewhere in Suffolk'. This confirms that in 1568 the manor still held portions of land physically located in other parishes or vills. The Empoles part of the manor is described separately as 'All that manor or all these lands tenements rents as well free or bond called Empoles otherwise Westhales'. Also specifically listed separately is 'one Close with theappurtenances lieng & being in Eston aforesaid called & known by the name of Skottland Close' and finally, 400 sheep of the manor are listed. A further break down of the tangible manorial assets informs us that there were 100 messuages, 20 cottages, 12 tofts and (a surprising large number of) 12 windmills.<sup>427</sup> The demesne land is described as 100 acres, 30 acres of meadow, 200 acres of pasture, 12 acres of wood, 400 acres of heath & furze, 40 acres [blank] and free foldage in Easton, Southwold, Northales alias Covehithe, South Cove and Wrentham.

The 1531 survey only listed just over 496 acres of land in total but it is acknowledged that the survey was not complete and did not include all the freehold land nor any copyhold or common lands, woodlands or land of the manor situated in other vills. The total of land listed in 1568 is 782 acres, including woodland as well, which would indicate that the common and copyhold land plus lands situated elsewhere contained c.274 acres. This of course would not account for any lands physically lost to erosion between these dates. Land which was flooded and had become unusable could be accounted for with the 40 acres noted as [blank].

Of the manorial housing stock, 32 dwellings are specifically listed along with the 'round' figure of 100 messuages. Originally each messuage on the manor or separate plot of land would historically have included housing but by 1568 it is impossible to know how many remained. A certain number of dwellings may also have remained in Northales and Southwold.

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<sup>426</sup> The Tasboroughs acted as trustees for the Hopton family. Deed to lead to the use of a fine, 1568, HA30/312/33, SA.

<sup>427</sup> The large number of windmills recorded cannot be explained. It may be a scribal error and should have read 2. It seems unlikely at this date they were being used to drain any flooded land as the earliest recorded wind powered engines for water drainage occur for fen drainage mills constructed around 1580. Brian Flint, *Suffolk Windmills* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012), 85.

During the period 1524-1603 the vill of Easton witnessed dramatic decline in both its population and its economic fortunes.<sup>428</sup> There are no extant court rolls for Easton Bavents from 1557 to 1605 allowing any further analysis of the manor at this time. It was also during this period when the dramatic and devastating topographical changes occurred to the haven and Easton river resulting in accretion, flooding and the ruination of land and also loss of land due to erosion.

By 1590 the manor was in the possession of William Roberds (also known as William Roberds Smith) of Burgh Castle the first husband of Dorothy Hopton, a daughter of Sir Arthur Hopton of Witham, Somerset and Suffolk.<sup>429</sup> It is not entirely clear from surviving records if Easton Bavents was settled upon Sir Owen Hopton's son, Sir Arthur Hopton of Witham, Somerset, or if at some time prior to his death in 1595 it was sold to the Tasboroughs (who had marriage links with the Hoptons) who subsequently sold it to William Roberds.<sup>430</sup> The manor of Easton, along with other local Suffolk holdings was possibly part of Dorothy's marriage settlement to William.<sup>431</sup> William died in 1596, and the manors passed to their five-year-old son William Roberds (sometimes Roberts) Smith. In 1597 at the time of her re-marriage, to Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey, Dorothy was guardian in socage of the lands of her son William and jointress for life of lands from her first husband.<sup>432</sup> Certainly for the period 1601-1609, it is Dorothy who is listed as the recipient of £30 40s 8d of fines collected and received for land and property at Easton and elsewhere by Martin Man, clerk to Nathaniel Bacon.<sup>433</sup> Bacon was the second son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Queen Elizabeth's, Lord Keeper, who eschewing high office, concentrated on the local administration of his native Norfolk estates and holding many local offices.<sup>434</sup> The young William Roberds Smith died in 1609 and the manor passed to his younger

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<sup>428</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>429</sup> Jane Key, 'The Letters and Will of Lady Dorothy Bacon, 1597-1629', in *A Miscellany*, ed. Jane Key, vol. LVI, Norfolk Record Society (Norwich: Norfolk Record Society, 1991), 78.

<sup>430</sup> Copinger, *Manors of Suffolk, Blything*, 2:63; Copinger, *The Manors of Suffolk, Notes on Their History and Devolution, The Hundreds of Lothingland and Mutford, Plomesgate and Risbridge*, 5:19.

<sup>431</sup> These included the manors of Kessingland Stapletons and Burgh Castle, plus lands in Burgh castle, Pakefield and Kessingland. See Court Book, 1598-1599 and 1605-1610, SC 2/203/93, TNA.

<sup>432</sup> Key, 'Letters of Dorothy Bacon', 79.

<sup>433</sup> Account of fines received by Dorothy Bacon from Martin Man from property in Wissett, Kessingland, Burgh Castle (Suffolk), etc. 1601-1613, MC 1370/10,810XI, NRO.

<sup>434</sup> 'Bacon, Nathaniel (1546-1622), of Stiffkey, Irmington, Norf.', History of Parliament Online, accessed 1 December 2023, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/bacon-nathaniel-1546-1622>; Bacon left an extensive archive of papers which have been edited by the NRS along with details of his life and career. *The Papers of Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey, Volumes I-VII, 1566-1622*, Norfolk Record Society (Norwich: Norfolk Record Society, 1979-2023).

brother Owen, who at this date was aged around fourteen. Nathaniel Bacon now acted as guardian, and it is from Bacon's alleged mismanagement of the profits arising from lands inherited by Owen Smith, which included the manor of Easton, that prolonged litigation ensued in the Court of Ward and Liveries.<sup>435</sup> From February 1609 to December 1613, whilst Smith was underage, it was alleged that rentals of his properties overseen by Bacon amounted to £2,500 14s 7d and that from this he was due £1,602 9s 11d. Bacon claimed £928 4s 8d for his expenses in educating and instructing Owen Smith.<sup>436</sup> Owen Smith died in 1637 and his widow Dame Alice Smith sold the manor of Easton in 1639 to Sir William Playters and his son and heir Thomas, of nearby Sotterley, Suffolk for the sum of £900. The indenture does not provide any in depth description of the manor to enable comparisons to be made with the extent listed in the 1568 deed. By 1650 the manor has been bought by Jeffrey Howland of Streatham and by 1666 he also has purchased the manor of Northales alias Covehithe and property in Parham.<sup>437</sup> It was put in trust for his second son John, with his father-in-law John Langley designated as a trustee.<sup>438</sup> It was John Howlands daughter Elizabeth, who in 1695, aged c.14, married Wriothesley Russell, the future Duke of Bedford, and took the manors with her.<sup>439</sup> A document headed as 'Mr Playters particulars' lists details of the manors of Covehithe and 'Esson Bavent' and values them at £317 10s with the rider that this is the value per annum 'without improvement'. An area of 1000 acres of water and marsh lying between the two manors is also listed and described as 'improvable'.<sup>440</sup> Although catalogued and dated as c.1680, nominal information within the list does not correspond with listings for the 1674 Hearth Tax, therefore it probably dates to c.1650 and the sale of the manor to Jeffrey Howland who was looking to purchase land for improvement.

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<sup>435</sup> See records held in the Court of Ward and Liveries: Deeds and Evidences, WARD 2/33/118a/73 and 76, WARD 2/63/241/175, 1610-1614, TNA. Also see Special Collections: Court Rolls, Court book, 1598-1599; 1605-1610, SC 2/203/93, TNA.

<sup>436</sup> The rentals came from the manors of Wissett and Le Roos and Easton Bavents, Suffolk and the parsonage of Gorlsby [Gorleston?] and lands and ground in Gorlsby Pakefield. See WARD 2/63/241/175, 1614, TNA.

<sup>437</sup> Jeffrey Howland is listed as patron in 1650, Suffolk Inquisition, 1647-1657, COMM/12A/15 – Salisbury f.560-561, Lambeth Palace Library; See also entry dated March 1655, p.20. Court book for Easton Bavents manor with Empoles, 1641-1689, 1309:1779/Gooch/4/365 (pt), SA; Deed of lease and release, 1666, V5/19/3/2, SA. Jeffrey is also known as Geoffrey Howland. It is due to this change of ownership that the majority of the manorial court records for Easton survived within the Duke of Bedford's family papers held at Bedfordshire Record Office, see NRA17140.

<sup>438</sup> Lease and release, 1666, V5/19/3/3, SA. Jeffrey Howland married Grisogon Langley, daughter of John Langley and sister of Philip Langley, another trustee.

<sup>439</sup> 'Streatham, British History Online', accessed 24 July 2024, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-environs/vol1/pp478-491>.

<sup>440</sup> Mr Playter's Particulars, c.1680, GBR/0012/MS Doc.1548, Cambridge University Library.

It was initially thought that no manorial court records for Easton had survived post 1611, the date of the last roll held within the Duke of Bedford's collection. A document of 1634, listed on the MDR, proved upon closer inspection not to be a manorial court document. During the latter stages of research, a court book for Easton Bavents with Empoles, 1641-1689, came to light within an uncatalogued collection of solicitors records and covers parts of the period of ownership of the manor by both the Playters and the Howland family and will be discussed in Chapter 8.<sup>441</sup>

### **Manorial wreck rights**

The 'right of wreck', bestowed on the holder in possession of wreck washed onto a specified stretch of shoreline, had been granted out from the Crown to many coastal manorial lords by the end of the twelfth century.<sup>442</sup> For Easton Bavents and its neighbours in north-east Suffolk, these rights were being discussed in 1236-1237, in a now lost cartulary document from Butley Priory. This document and the rights for this stretch of the Suffolk coast were discussed in Chapter 2 and **Table 1**. Examples of goods washing ashore at Easton can be found within the sampled accounts for the period 1431-1473 although the value of the wrecked goods to the manorial lord is difficult to assess without a full transcription of all the manorial court rolls as instances of such occurrences are sporadic. A study of the Hethewardmote court rolls of Leiston abbey, 1377 to 1482, undertaken by Johnson records the average annual value of wreck presentments over the period 1377-1409 as 21d although this figure is slightly misleading as less than a quarter of the finds were worth over 12d.<sup>443</sup> In 1431-32 a pipe of red wine (126 gallons) came ashore at Easton and was valued at £2, whilst an empty pipe of wine and two empty barrels in 1470-71 were only worth 8d. A wrecked ship, which was sold to William Berebrewer in 1464-5 was valued at £2, whilst in 1472-73 another wrecked boat was deemed 'good enough to be taken up for the lord's use, although no value was given. This demonstrates that for most of the time the revenue generated by salvaged wrecked goods was not of a high value.

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<sup>441</sup> Court book, 1641-1689, 1309:17079/Gooch/4/365 (uncatalogued), SA.

<sup>442</sup> Wreck rights and the economics of them relating to the Suffolk coast are discussed more fully by; Tom Johnson, 'Medieval Law and Materiality: Shipwrecks, Finders, and Property on the Suffolk Coast, ca. 1380–1410', *The American Historical Review* 120, no. 2 (2015): 407–32; Johnson, 'Economics of Shipwreck'; Bailey, 'Coastal Fishing'; A wider discussion of shipwrecks and wreck rights are given in, David Cressy, *Shipwrecks And The Bounty Of The Sea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

<sup>443</sup> Johnson, 'Medieval Law and Materiality', 425; Leiston Abbey held the wreck rights to the vills of Sizewell and Thorp on the Suffolk coast. The Hethewardmote court administered the legal business relating to wreck goods. See, Johnson, 'Economics of Shipwreck'.

Occasionally however, a more valuable find would occur and then it was of a greater financial interest that ownership was ultimately claimed. In 1606, a mast was found floating in the water at Easton Bavents, its value recorded as 15 shillings in total for those who found it, and Henry Benefice of Easton, 'did sease it to the lords use of the manor of Easton'.<sup>444</sup> Ownership of the mast, which had floated up the coast past Walberswick haven, was also claimed by the lord of the manor of Covehithe, who was contesting that it came ashore at Covehithe and by six men from Southwold who tried to bring it ashore at Southwold. A meeting was held on the beach at the boundary between Easton and Covehithe between representatives of Thomas Playters, lord of the manor of Northales (alias Covehithe) and Sir Nathaniel Bacon for the manor of Easton to discuss the matter. The meeting, held at the boundary between the two manors, 'near the sea', was also recorded in the Leet court minutes as well as in the written correspondence of Nathaniel Bacon.<sup>445</sup>

## Conclusion

By the examination of a selection of extant records, further insight into the lost topography and physical structures of the manor of Easton Bavents with Empoles, along with an understanding of the characteristics and identity of the maritime economy and community, has been made possible. Uncovering crucial documentary evidence of the haven lying between Easton and Covehithe and associated placements of the 'hethes', church, chapel, main manorial demesne and other domestic tenures has allowed a spatial layout to be visualised (Figure 22). This tangible, visual sense of the topography, which has never previously been realised, allows discussions relating to flooding, erosion and accretion to be set into context and the extent of losses detailed within the manorial court records to be realised.

Differing levels of opportunistic economic forces can be discerned during the variant manorial administrations at Easton between c.1450 and 1639. The earlier 'weak' manorial administration of Easton by Thomas de Bawent, as an individual unit in the early fourteenth century, allowed development of a new hithe and market as coastal changes wrought by fierce storms of the late thirteenth century opened up the haven and mere at the estuary. By the 1450s, and John Hopton's lordship, the manorial

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<sup>444</sup> Victor Morgan, Jane Key, and Barry Taylor, eds., *The Papers of Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey, 1603-1607*, Norfolk Record Society 74 (Norfolk Record Society, 2010), 242.

<sup>445</sup> Kessingland Stapletons court book, with other manors including Easton Bavents, 1598-1610, SC2/203/93, f.33, TNA.

court rolls provide evidence of a buoyant and bustling community with new buildings and the brewing of beer and its associated rowdy behaviour being more indicative of an upcoming urban setting than a small coastal manor in rural Suffolk. By the close of John Hopton's lordship the leading figures at the manorial courts are a strong mix of alien incomers from the Low Countries and men from established Easton Bavents families both spearheading the economic maritime rise and its fortunes. John Hopton died a wealthy man with a large estate, and it is reasonable to suggest that his administration of the manor of Easton, within this larger estate, attracted entrepreneurial immigrants and helped to provide a framework which allowed the economic boom of the second half of the fifteenth century to take hold.<sup>446</sup> It is difficult to conclude exactly how Hopton contributed to this economic boom but he was recognised as an enterprising man who valued the importance of education and new thinking.

The manorial administration of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century was characterised by the absenteeism of the lord. The manor of Easton Bavents with Empoles was a small part of scattered holdings for the wider Hopton family and their Bacon/Smith descendants. As the economic boom faded, land value was lost due to accretion, flooding and subsequent erosion, however, with no extant court records for the period 1557-1605, any closer analysis of the administration during this period is impossible. The manor was eventually sold in 1639, after a lengthy period of litigation and accusations of the diversion of manorial income, to the locally based Playter's family.

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<sup>446</sup> Colin Richmond did not investigate the manorial court rolls for Easton within his work on Hopton, only the manorial accounts. A fuller translation and transcription of the manorial court rolls for the period of his lordship may provide further insight. Such work was not feasible within the scope of this thesis. Richmond, *John Hopton*.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Maritime economy, c.1400-c.1550**

#### **Introduction**

As discussed in the introduction and methodology chapter, no focused micro study of a small Suffolk maritime community, examining all aspects of its medieval and early modern maritime enterprises, has been conducted. The larger ports of Lowestoft, Aldeburgh and Ipswich have been examined to varying degrees.<sup>447</sup> This chapter will examine the requisitioning of ships and men by the English crown along with the varied fishing and trading ventures of the people of Easton, also drawing on activity from other north-east Suffolk coastal settlements. These fishing and trading ventures were often carried out by the same vessels, this dual use ensuring they could be kept working all year round. Voyages were made around the coast from Newcastle to Southampton, along with further ventures to Orkney and onwards to Iceland, and to Calais as part of the wool trade. Easton cannot be described as just a fishing community or just involved in local coastal trading; it was engaged in a much wider variety of maritime enterprises. The key period was the 150 years from c.1430-c.1580, when its maritime economy witnessed a dramatic rise to peak c.1490 and plateaux to c.1510 before gradually slipping into terminal decline, complete by the late 1570s.

#### **Easton Creek and its vessels<sup>448</sup>**

From the late thirteenth century customs records started to be collated at what became known as 'head ports' in coastal areas. In essence these were the main trading ports with jurisdiction over outlying smaller ports called creeks, members or outliers. Dunwich was recorded as a creek under the jurisdiction of Great Yarmouth

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<sup>447</sup> Butcher, *Medieval Lowestoft*; Butcher, *Lowestoft, 1550-1750*; Allen, 'The Development of the Borough of Aldeburgh, 1547-1660'; Amor, *Late Medieval Ipswich*.

<sup>448</sup> The use of the term creek, member or outlier to define a smaller harbour or haven with associated vessels has not been applied consistently in extant documents nor in research findings and for the purposes of clarity for this chapter Easton, Southwold, Walberswick and Covehithe will all be referred to as creeks.

along with its outliers Southwold, Walberswick and in all probability Covehithe and Easton Bavents too.<sup>449</sup> A legal document from 1407 refers to Richard Reed of Easton who stopped paying his customs duty to Dunwich port indicating a direct link between Easton and the payment of such duties to Dunwich.<sup>450</sup> The haven lying between Easton and Covehithe was first documented in the manorial accounts of 1395 and its presence confirmed in the survey dating c.1431-1531.<sup>451</sup> As we saw in Chapters 3 and 5, the haven was probably most accessible to seafaring craft during the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, but then changes on the coastline occurring over the period from the 1530s-1560s, indicate that the haven became unusable to all but the smallest vessels. A major survey of all English head ports and their associated havens, creeks and landing places was conducted in 1565/66 and a landing place described as 'Easton Hithe' was recorded lying between Southwold and Covehithe.<sup>452</sup> A certificate of the Suffolk commissioners of this survey described Southwold's 'harbour' as at the 'new keye' and at 'woodsende' with the landing place for Easton and Covehithe described as 'at the hithes upon the sea'.<sup>453</sup> This indicates that by 1565/66 vessels can no longer access the shelter of Easton haven but have to land at a hithe on the beach. The number of mariners and vessels associated with each port, creek and landing place are also given, although for Easton, Covehithe and Kessingland it is not entirely clear which figure for vessels relates to which place. No larger trading ships are recorded but five 'fisherboats' and eleven small 'fishers' are recorded along with twenty mariners and fishermen for Easton, twenty-two for Covehithe and eleven for Kessingland. It is feasible that any remaining vessels owned by Easton inhabitants would also have operated out of the creek of Southwold using the moorings on the Buss Creek or Woods End stretch of water which lay to the south of the parish.

Prior to 1786 and the Act of General Registry there was no co-ordinated, central registering of vessels and their home port, however, every vessel had a 'home' port which was always associated with a particular place, generally the place of abode of the residence of the chief owner which did not change unless the vessel was sold.<sup>454</sup> The earliest such association for an Easton vessel was at Southampton in 1428, with

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<sup>449</sup> Williams, *Maritime Trade, 1550-1590*, 5.

<sup>450</sup> Recognitions of debt, Swillington and Dunwich, Sep 1407, Add. Roll 40707, BL. Thanks to Tom Johnson for this reference.

<sup>451</sup> V5/19/1/1.10; Survey, c.1431-1531, f.8.

<sup>452</sup> English Port Survey, Suffolk Section, 1565/66, E159/350/336, TNA.

<sup>453</sup> Certificate of the said commissioners of particulars relating to the ports, 1566, SP12/39 f.54, TNA.

<sup>454</sup> Williams, *Maritime Trade, 1550-1590*, 216, fn.2.

the recording for customs duty of 'le *John de Estone, mestre John Terry*'.<sup>455</sup> In 1572 the last recorded vessel 'of Easton' was the *George*, on a voyage to Hull, with Robert Harrison as master.<sup>456</sup> When the ports, creeks and landing places of England were recorded in a survey for the crown in 1578, Eastoness, Suffolk, was listed, which suggests that what remained of the extended ness could be used as a landing place.<sup>457</sup>

A compilation of data relating to vessels defined as 'of Easton', from various sources between 1428 and 1572, has identified at least fifty separate vessels, see Appendix 7. The terminology for a vessel is usually unvaried, with ship and boat used with no clear distinction on how the term was applied by the scribe, although presumably ship was used for a vessel larger than a boat. More precise descriptions of the vessel types within the documentation are scarce although references to ballinger (1452), gret boat (1528), fyssher (1541 and 1567), double carvel (1544), coole boote (1550) and a crayer (1568) are given.<sup>458</sup> The term vessel will be used throughout this chapter to refer to both boats and ships.

### **Evidence of the Crown's requisitioning of ships and men for war**

The English crown has always exploited its merchant fleet for service in its warfare campaigns. Navy payrolls recording the requisitioning and payment of ships and men for naval duties have been utilised for research into the size and composition of such fleets.<sup>459</sup> The requisitioned major fleet which sailed to France or on naval operations between 1324 and 1400 has been calculated from the above mentioned sources and it is evident that vessels from the north-east Suffolk creeks were amongst those

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<sup>455</sup> Studer, *The Port Books of Southampton 1427-1430*, 19.

<sup>456</sup> Port of Hull Port Book, 1572, E190/306/10. f.12r, TNA.

<sup>457</sup> 'List of All the Ports. 1578. MS SP 15/25 f.238', State Papers Online, 1578, <https://link-gale-com.uea.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/MC4304781366/SPOL?sid=bookmark-SPOL&xid=9c43dd7e>.

<sup>458</sup> Construction techniques and operational usage discussed further by Butcher at, Butcher, *Medieval Lowestoft, 114–43*; Butcher, *Lowestoft, 1550–1750, 161–64*; David Butcher, *The Ocean's Gift : Fishing in Lowestoft during the Pre-Industrial Era, 1550–1750*, vol. 3, *Studies in East Anglian History* (Norwich: Centre of East Anglian Studies, University of East Anglia, 1995), 93–94; Butcher, *Rigged for River and Sea, 8, 82, 66, 34, 42, 46*.

<sup>459</sup> Craig Lambert, 'The Contribution Of The Cinque Ports To The Wars Of Edward II And Edward III: New Methodologies And Estimates', in *Roles Of The Sea In Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), 59–78; Andrew Ayton and Craig Lambert, 'A Maritime Community in War And Peace: Kentish Ports, Ships And Mariners, 1320-1400', *Archaeologica Cantiana* 134 (2014): 67–104; Gary P. Baker, Craig L. Lambert, and David Simpkin, eds., *Military Communities in Late Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Andrew Ayton*, vol. 44, *Warfare in History* (Boydell & Brewer, 2018).

requisitioned.<sup>460</sup> A vessel from Covehithe joined the fleet supporting Edward II's campaign in Scotland.<sup>461</sup> The act of this vessel's requisition was a new departure for Edward II, as instead of sending out officials to do the work he negotiated directly with nine 'ports' in Norfolk and Suffolk to provide five ships, although between them they had already contributed two to the fleet.<sup>462</sup> It is of interest that the vessel is listed 'as of Covehithe' in 1322 which would potentially indicate that the vill was of greater maritime importance than Easton at this date. This is prior to the gaining of the market charter at Easton in 1330 and the economic expansion attributed to this and the changes occurring on the coastline at the haven situated between Covehithe and Easton.<sup>463</sup>

Between 1449-1451 Burwash has calculated that 161 English ships were hired by the crown.<sup>464</sup> The *George* of Easton, a 30-ton vessel, with John Pope, master, was listed requisitioned at Poole in 1438, within the exchequer Navy Payroll accounts; she was bound for France.<sup>465</sup> A few years later in 1444, John Helm of Easton directed that his part of the ship, which he owned with John Buschop of Southwold, be sold at the time of his death. When writing the will in the October of that year, the ship was 'at present in the King's service' and was 'to be sold when it comes home or back to the country'. If it did not return then the legacies he requested were to be 'to be null and void', demonstrating the economic importance to him of its ownership.<sup>466</sup> In 1497 the *Christopher* of Easton, the *Barbara* of Southwold and the *Nicholas* of Walberswick along with other ships from Dunwich, Orford and Aldeburgh, were requisitioned by Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey to take part in another Scottish campaign.<sup>467</sup> Between

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<sup>460</sup> See Table 2, Ayton and Lambert, 'A Maritime Community in War And Peace: Kentish Ports, Ships And Mariners, 1320-1400', 70.

<sup>461</sup> Craig Lambert, 'Taking The War to Scotland and France: The Supply and Transportation of English Armies By Sea, 1320-60' (PhD, Hull, University of Hull, 2009), 84.

<sup>462</sup> The ports listed are Brunham to supply 1, Snyterle, Wyeton, Cleye, Salthous to supply 2, (all Norfolk), Baudreseye, Covehithe to supply 1, Guston, Waleton, Felixstowe, Colneyse to supply 1 (all Suffolk). Lambert, 'The Contribution Of The Cinque Ports To The Wars Of Edward II And Edward III: New Methodologies And Estimates', 65; Maxwell-Lyte, H. C., ed., *Calendar of the Close Rolls: Edward II, Vol 3, 1318-1323* (London: HMSO, 1895), 463.

<sup>463</sup> It has not been possible to confirm if the term Covehithe was used in the original Close Roll of 1322 or if the place name has been converted from Northales in line with editorial conventions. If Covehithe was used this is an early reference to the 'hithe' at the Cove.

<sup>464</sup> Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping 1460-1540*, 179.

<sup>465</sup> The *George* has incorrectly been associated with the port of Easton in Hampshire. 'The Merchant Fleet Of Late Medieval and Tudor England 1400-1580'; See John Pope and the *George* at Southampton in 1430. Studer, *The Port Books of Southampton 1427-1430*, 93.

<sup>466</sup> Appendix 1. It is probable that the ship was one of the troop transport ships used during the French wars of 1439-1452, see; Bottomley, *A Short History*, 3.

<sup>467</sup> Ernest Read Cooper, *Memories of Bygone Dunwich*, 2nd ed. (Southwold: Suffolk Press, 1948), 6.

1488 and 1494 three vessels of the same names, of Easton, Southwold and Walberswick, listed for custom duties at the Port of London, were carrying wool and woolfells to Calais for various Merchants of the Staple.<sup>468</sup> It is clear that the vessels used for trading and fishing could at short notice also find themselves carrying troops and supplies into war.

Kowaleski, in her focused study on the south western fisheries, explains that it was 'the expansion of the regions fisheries that provided the 'nursery of [requisitioned] seamen' so prized by the Tudor navy'.<sup>469</sup> The requisitioned men and ships of the north-east Suffolk creeks, including Easton, contributed likewise to this prized nursery of seamen. Between 1512-1514 a total of 54 English fighting ships were hired by the crown.<sup>470</sup> A 'ship list', held within customs accounts of the Exchequer, recorded vessels from Norfolk and Suffolk ports and creeks in January 1513 and provided more in-depth detail of the vessels these ports had agreed to provide to the crown under the requisitioning regulations.<sup>471</sup> From a comparison of those listed as available, and listed as of Easton and Covehithe in 1513, it is evident that Easton presented the larger number and tunnage of vessel (**Table 16**). Tunnage is the freight capacity of a sea going vessel, primarily in terms of the amount of cargo it could carry. The tun (originally seven standard barrels of wine) was a static storage unit based on volume not weight.<sup>472</sup> Often described as a 'ship census' these lists were not a full listing of all vessels belonging to a particular port or creek but were produced to record the provisional number which owners had agreed would be available to the Crown. For the vessels chosen, the owners and crew would then be given an advance on payment and wages and told to embark to a specific port at a specific date in the future. For James Sponer of Easton, the owner of three vessels, the *Jamys*, *Trinitie* and *John*, records from the state papers provide further evidence of this process.

An indenture was drawn up at Southwold, dated the 9 April 1513, between William Keby and William Burwell, the Kings servants, the bailiffs of Southwold and James Sponer, owner and William Williamson, master of the *Trinitie* (portage of 40 tunnes) along with Richard Smythe, owner and William Sucklyne, master of the *Peter* (portage

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<sup>468</sup> 'The London Customs Accounts', Pt IV, No.1, Pt IV, No.3.

<sup>469</sup> Maryanne Kowaleski, 'The Expansion of the South-Western Fisheries in Late Medieval England', *The Economic History Review* 53, no. 3 (2000): 452.

<sup>470</sup> Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping 1460-1540*, 183.

<sup>471</sup> Port of Yarmouth: List of vessels, 1512-1513, E122/195/10, TNA; Burwash dates the document to January 16, 1513. Burwash, 185.

<sup>472</sup> Butcher, *Medieval Lowestoft*, 321.

of 40 tunnes).<sup>473</sup> Keby and Burwell were commissioners, appointed by the King for the 'presting of ships to be brought to London...to convey victuals, ordnance and necessaries for his army royal, over the sea into France'. Five similar indentures were also drawn up by them at Woodbridge, Dunwich, Yarmouth and Cley, for similar requisitions, all vessels under 50 tunnes. At Southwold, two of the smaller Easton vessels, named within the Exchequer list above, have been requisitioned for the Kings service. The owners and masters signed to say they had received 113s 4d towards the 'rigging of the shippes and preparing of the maryners' and both vessels were to be at the 'porte of London the 22 day of the said month of April next'. Robert Hawe signed as bailiff of Southwold, James Sponer signed his name and Richard Smith signed with a merchant's mark. Both the *Trinitie* and the *Peter* were to have eight crewmen each and 3s and 6d was listed as the 'maryners wages' for the *Trinitie*. In the original Exchequer list, for north-east Suffolk ships under 50 tonnes poundage, Lowestoft had presented 1, Pakefield and Kirkley 8, Covehithe 3, Southwold 20, Walberswick 11 and Dunwich 18, but it was the Easton vessels which were chosen.<sup>474</sup>

Within the same set of papers as described above, there is a subsequent listing of vessels, although its purpose is unclear as the heading has been mutilated. Here a selection of vessels of 60 tonnes and over, from the earlier listing at f.191, are listed, along with names of their owners, which indicates that these may have been the selection of larger vessels requisitioned for service.<sup>475</sup> James Sponer was again listed from Easton with his larger vessel, the *James*, of 60 tunnes. Two from Southwold of 120 and 60 tunnes respectively are also listed along with their owners Henry Joye and Robert Godell. A further folio lists six vessels which have not been 'retained for the Kings Service' as 'the Merchants Adventurers have appointed [them] to be laden with goods and merchandises to this Synxon mart'. No vessels from Easton appear in this list but the *Edmonde* of Southwold and the *Barbara* of Walberswick are given along with the names of their owners, Thomas Holborne and Henry Blyborough, also listed as Adventurers.<sup>476</sup> The reasons for selecting the smaller Easton ships and not

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<sup>473</sup> J.S. Brewer, ed., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, 1509-1514*, vol. 1 (London: HMSO, 1920), 887-89; 'Hired Ships SP1/229/f.191-f.202', June 1513, State Papers Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol1/pp887-899>.

<sup>474</sup> E122/195/10, TNA.

<sup>475</sup> Brewer, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, 1509-1514*; 'Hired Ships SP1/229/f.191-f.202'.

<sup>476</sup> The Synxon mart was a large summer market held in Antwerp in the Netherlands, patronised by the Merchant Adventurers of London. Brewer, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, 1509-1514*; 'Hired Ships SP1/229/f.191-f.202'.

those of the other ports is unclear, although perhaps the Merchant Adventurers were able to exert influence on the requisitioning selection.

These requisitioning papers help illustrate the complex economic make-up of the merchants and vessel owners of the small north east coast ports and creeks. Merchant owner James Sporer of Easton owned at least three vessels in 1513 and a comparison of the size of the vessels listed for Easton and Covehithe (**Table 16**), shows it was Easton which was now presenting the larger number and tunnage of vessel. The largest vessel put forward from the north-east Suffolk creeks was the *James* of Southwold with a poundage of 120 tuns and the *Thomas* from Walberswick at 70 tuns was the second largest. Easton, Southwold, Walberswick and Dunwich all offered vessels of 60 tuns which indicated that Southwold and Walberswick creeks could accommodate the larger vessels. The largest vessels put forward by Covehithe, Pakefield and Kirkley were only 40 tuns indicating that they could not accommodate the size of vessel that Easton was able to.<sup>477</sup>

A military survey of the merchant fleet on the east coast in 1544, compiled prior to an expedition to Scotland, does not specifically mention vessels at Easton or Covehithe although it is likely they were included in the tunnage of Southwold which totalled 600 tunnes.<sup>478</sup> Mariners and fishermen from Easton were however 'prest' into service of the King. At Orfordness in 1545, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, wrote to Lord Paget regarding the protection of the coast against invasion and states that he had 'ridden all along the sea coasts of Norfolk and Suffolk....the men of the coasts are all mariners and either have gone to sea to serve the King or else into Iselond'.<sup>479</sup> In 1562, a more detailed description of 'mariner, soldiers and gunners [being] fet (as in fetch) from divers places.... to serve in her Grace's ships from time to time' exists.<sup>480</sup> In August, 93 mariners from 13 different parishes, including Southwold, Easton and Covehithe were 'prested' to crew vessels at Gillingham, Kent and later in November a further 119 were similarly 'prested' at Southwold alone.<sup>481</sup> Many of these mariners would have served in the *Hope*, *Rowbridge* and *Willoughby*, her Highnesses ships, appointed to 'waft' or protect the Iceland shipping fleet of that year.<sup>482</sup> The large

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<sup>477</sup> E122/195/10, TNA.

<sup>478</sup> James Gairdner and R.H. Brodie, eds., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Jan-July 1544*, vol. 19 Part 1 (London: HMSO, 1903), 71–87.

<sup>479</sup> SP 1/202, f.202, 1545, TNA

<sup>480</sup> C. S. Knighton and D. M. Loades, *Elizabethan Naval Administration*, Publications of the Navy Records Society: Vol. 160 (Farnham: Ashgate for the Navy Records Society, 2013), 207–9.

<sup>481</sup> Knighton and Loades, 223.

<sup>482</sup> Knighton and Loades, 467.

number of mariners pressed into service must have had an adverse effect on the fishing and trade of the east coast ports and creeks and the parishes who supplied the men.

### **Fishing: evidence from wills**

The fishing industry was an important source of wealth to east coast communities in the late middle ages, dominated by Great Yarmouth's herring industry of national and international importance.<sup>483</sup> The industry was not closely regulated by the Crown, and consequently it is not especially well documented, although our knowledge of its nature, organisation and fortunes is gradually being enhanced through detailed studies of local sources which provide incidental information about fishing activities.<sup>484</sup> These reveal the importance of the seasonal herring and to a lesser extent, sprat fisheries during the late summer and autumn to coastal communities between Lowestoft and Leiston.

A promising source for evidence of the different types of fishing carried on from Easton can be found in the probate records left by the mariners themselves. Of the 191 extant Easton Bavents wills and probates transcribed, nine men defined themselves as mariners when writing their wills, whilst none used the term fisherman even though within their wills they all left fishing related bequests of nets and ropes. These men did not view themselves simply as fishermen. The details of types and quantities of nets, and other fishing related gear, owned by the men and their families provide an insight into the varieties of fishing carried out; great nets, fowers, sperling nets, nets of twelve and nine scores, all indicate different fishing operations were carried out and various species were caught.

In the period 1440 to 1600, fifty of the 191 wills include information about fishing nets see **Table 17** for an itemisation of the information recorded.

At Easton, between 1446 and 1558, twelve score herring nets were more commonly used, in contrast to Lowestoft where nine score was the most prevalent.<sup>485</sup> The relative importance of spurling nets against the number of fowers and twelve scores is strongly indicative of fishing for herring more than sprats, which in turn is indicative

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<sup>483</sup> Wendy R. Childs and Maryanne Kowaleski, 'Fishing And Fisheries In The Middle Ages, The Eastern Fisheries and The Western Fisheries', in *England's Sea Fisheries, The Commercial Sea Fisheries of England And Wales Since 1300* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), 19.

<sup>484</sup> Childs and Kowaleski, 19–28; Bailey, 'Coastal Fishing'; Butcher, 'The Herring Fisheries'.

<sup>485</sup> Butcher, *Medieval Lowestoft*, 117.

of the availability of larger boats necessary to follow the herring shoals off the coast. This contrasts with the harbourless communities of Thorpe and Sizewell where the fishing of sprats was more important than herring due to the fish swimming closer to shore and smaller vessels launched from the beach could be used. Fishing for herring, by following the shoals up the coast required capital and wealthy backers to underwrite the venture.<sup>486</sup> Easton had a haven to accommodate larger vessels of up to 60 tunnes and, as will be evidenced within this chapter, the mercantile links to finance such trips.

The first 'gret' or great net listed within a will, was in 1456 and then no more occur until 1483, when William Chestor left a range of nets to his son, son-in-law and daughter, including a 'manfare of gret nets with warrop and two manfares of sperlings'. These great nets were used to catch cod and ling further into the northern waters of the north sea and on trips to the Orkneys, Faroe Islands and into Icelandic waters. The Icelandic fishing and trading trips are discussed more fully later in this chapter, and it is pertinent that the highest number of 'gret' nets are bequeathed between 1487 and 1538, a period when the voyages are recorded to be at their highest from the east coast ports.

The analysis of total net numbers in **Table 17** masks the wide variation in net ownership among the testators, ranging from some mariners who owned many nets compared to others who only bequeathed one or two. For example, Richard Barker, in 1492 left twenty-four nets divided equally between his son and his daughter with the ten, twelve score nets, described as 'ready to lay in the water'.<sup>487</sup> The term 'ready to lay in the water/or sea' might refer to dried nets, on land and not nets away being used on a fishing trip as others are so described. In 1550, Robert Stary, left sixteen spurling nets, sixteen 'flu' nets, four manfare of twelve score nets and a further two twelve score nets all to his son Robert. His wife and another beneficiary receive a further six nets between them. At the other end of the scale, in 1552, Edward Burrell only left one twelve score net in his will.<sup>488</sup> Valuations for the nets are scarce and as are only given in two of the wills, with a manfare of spurling nets valued at 16s in 1456 and an unknown quantity of twelve score nets priced at a total of 66s 8d in 1500, does not allow for any meaningful conclusions to be drawn.<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> Bailey, 'Coastal Fishing', 104.

<sup>487</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>488</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>489</sup> John Cooke, 1456 and John Chylderows, 1500, Appendix 1.

When death came, the nets, which were a valuable resource were passed on to close family members if any were living, usually to sons and daughters in preference to a wife. Jane Whittle, in her study of female inheritance patterns in Norfolk, concludes that although sons were usually bequeathed land and property, daughters were more likely to inherit cash or goods. Whilst land and property generally increased in value for the men, for the women the value of goods would largely depreciate. For the wives and daughters of mariners, the inheritance of nets (deemed goods) provided them not only with the ability to keep valuable equipment within the family, but also the option of obtaining income by putting them out for use by others who may have been unable to buy their own in return for the payment of money or quantities of fish.<sup>490</sup> In some instances the nets had been brought to the marriage by the wife as in the case of Katherine Blomevyle, who upon her marriage to Thomas brought with her twenty nets of twelve score, in all probability bequeathed to her by her father years earlier. When Thomas wrote his will in April 1536 he decreed that she should have them returned to her rather than going to their children.<sup>491</sup>

Other fishing related goods and apparel described within the wills included warropes (warps), a thick rope from which the drift nets hung suspended in the water, first described in 1483, some forty years after the first references to drift nets.<sup>492</sup> In 1456, the administration of John Cooke of Easton, detailed his debts including 20s for one wey of salt, enough for the curing of around 1,000 fish.<sup>493</sup> In 1505, John Peyrs left his wife Elizabeth a large quantity of nets, thirty weys of salt, half a share in a ship called the *Peter* and a boat called the *Elizabeth*.<sup>494</sup> This quantity of salt indicated that John was operating on a large scale and supplying salt to others. Some left specific quantities of fish, which indicated that the testator was very near death at the time of writing the will. Elizabeth Peers (widow of John above) mentioned 'her fisshe to be sold' in 1508 and on 18 December 1519, John Herne bequeathed '2 hundred cod I wyll my wyffe shall have one hundred and the other hundred be sold.....tow cades of heryng (1200 herring) be sowld....half a last of sprylyng (6,000) ... be sowlde'.<sup>495</sup> Herne's probate was granted just one month later on January 14<sup>th</sup>; death had been very close. This fish total potentially represented the tally of his fishing exploits over the previous season and demonstrated the variety and size of his catches with cod,

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<sup>490</sup> Whittle, 'Inheritance, Marriage, Widowhood and Remarriage', 46.

<sup>491</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>492</sup> William Chestor, Appendix 1.

<sup>493</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>494</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>495</sup> Appendix 1

herring and sperlings all listed. In his will of 1567, Henry Appleby, who described himself as a mariner, left his fyssher vessel to his wife and to his son Herry, 1,000 herring spetes.<sup>496</sup> The spetes or speets would have been used in the smoking of the herring when the fish were threaded onto the spetes and hung on racks within fish-houses, where they were subjected to intermittent smoke to dry them out.<sup>497</sup> Appleby had kinship links with Barton, north Lincolnshire, a small port on the Humber estuary as further bequests were left to his Uncle Alexander and his wife, resident there. Evidence of the personal effects of the fishermen within testamentary evidence was rare, however in 1492 Richard Barker left a dagswayne, a heavy blanket used on board vessels which was a valued item during the harsh winter voyages.<sup>498</sup>

Fishing doles appear within the wills of the Easton inhabitants because they carried a monetary value and were left as bequests if the testator knew they had an outstanding stake in a voyage.<sup>499</sup> Fishing catches were divided into shares called doles and were divided out amongst the owners, crew and those who financed the voyage, although the first share was always called Christ's dole, and this was subdivided up between the rector or parson of the home port of the vessel and the parson of the parishes of the other interested parties.<sup>500</sup> The dole could be paid out as a quantity of fish or in money, once the catch was sold. Over time, as fishermen moved around and had connections in more than one parish, disputes arose over which parish should be the recipient of Christ's dole and could cause unrest between parties as to who it should be paid to. A case heard at the Court of Augmentations between plaintiffs William Sponer, parson of Easton, and the parsons of Northales and Southwold, and defendant Robert Sewall, at some point between 1536-1554, involved an alleged attack on ships at Great Yarmouth to obtain fish for Christ's dole.<sup>501</sup>

### **Women's influence within the maritime economy**

The importance of the bequests of vessels and fishing nets to female members of the family and community has been discussed in the previous paragraph in relation to ensuring valuable assets were kept local and allowed income to be generated. The

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<sup>496</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>497</sup> Butcher, *Lowestoft, 1550-1750*, 123-24.

<sup>498</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>499</sup> Robert Stary, 1550 and John Leske, 1552, Appendix 1.

<sup>500</sup> Percy Millican, 'Christ's Dole', *Norfolk Archaeology* XXXV (1973): 154-57.

<sup>501</sup> Proceedings before the Court of Augmentations, 1536-1554, E321/41/329, TNA.

contribution of the inheritance patterns of certain female members of the community at Easton Bavents and their contribution to its maritime economy can be witnessed through the closer examination of the life of Alice Benefice and her three husbands. Within wills left by women it has been noted that premarital property, often bequeathed to them by fathers or previous husbands, was generally viewed as their own and theirs to leave as they pleased.<sup>502</sup> Although complex, this series of wills left by members of the family of Alice Benefice allows an in-depth look at close affinal and consanguineal ties between testators and provides evidential links between three families within the community which otherwise would not have become apparent. When mariner, George Benefice, a Scot, applied for Letters of Denization in 1542 he declared that he had an English wife, named Alice and five children.<sup>503</sup> George died intestate, and when his administration was proven in 1560 everything he owned went to Alice wife of Henry Appleby of Easton, late widow.<sup>504</sup> Alice had five young children to support and had remarried quickly after the death of George but Henry Appley was also a mariner and he too died in 1567.<sup>505</sup> Henry made provision for Alice and his son by her, called Henry, by bequeathing her his house, nets and half a share in a fishing boat which would revert to his son upon her death. He also made provision for Henry Benefice, George Benefice's youngest son to receive the above goods, if his son Henry died early. In 1568 Alice received from an older son named John Benefice, his share in a 'crayer' vessel and all his nets went to his younger brothers Henry, Edward and James.<sup>506</sup> When Alice herself died nine years later she was named Alles (Alice) Barfott, having remarried for a third time, Edmund Barfoot, of Easton.<sup>507</sup> Edmund had predeceased Alice by a year and in his will, proven in 1574/1575, it is clear he had recently purchased a windmill with his wife's money. This mill was ultimately left to Henry Benefice, with his brother James receiving Alice's house 'at the town's end' and the 'caddis yard' or fish barrel store.<sup>508</sup> Through the three marriages Alice was able to ensure that the valuable assets of fishing vessels and equipment had stayed within the family, and it was her wealth which had allowed her third husband to purchase a windmill for threshing corn. Alice Benefice's experience was not unique amongst the wives of the mariners nor amongst the wives of the earlier maritime

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<sup>502</sup> Susan E. James, *Women's Voices in Tudor Wills, 1485–1603: Authority, Influence and Material Culture* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2016), 163.

<sup>503</sup> Gairdner and Brodie, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, 1542*, XVII:283 (50).

<sup>504</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>505</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>506</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>507</sup> Alice Barfott, 1576, Appendix 1.

<sup>508</sup> Appendix 1.

merchants. Fishing and other maritime exploits were dangerous and resulted in the deaths of many young men with dependant families and likewise as Burgess notes, first wives often died young due to repeated child-birth, which meant that the second and sometimes the third wife would outlive an older spouse by some years and during this time increase her wealth.<sup>509</sup>

The growing and preparation of hemp for the making of ropes and sail cloth for the maritime industry was an important and yet often unrecorded activity undertaken generally by women within the maritime communities.<sup>510</sup> The plant grows strongly around streams or rivers and does especially well in water filled ditches, which would have been evident at Easton around the flooded haven area c.1560.<sup>511</sup> At Easton there are a few evidential traces of such activities during the later sixteenth century pointing to the community contributing to the small-scale hemp industry operating within the area. Wills proven in 1579 and 1587 record both hemplands attached to property within the parish and the bequeathing of quantities of hemp seed to wives.<sup>512</sup> Sequestration accounts for Easton at the turn of the seventeenth century recorded tithe payments due from sixteen individuals on crops of 'hempe, haye and earbiche' and on 'a pige, lam and wole'.<sup>513</sup> Of these, nine (60%) paid amounts ranging from 3d to 6d for the value of their hemp crop indicating that hemp was a favoured crop to be grown. At Southwold, ten stone of hemp was bequeathed for the making of a cable for a vessel and in 1582-3, at Walberswick, Warner found evidence of small-scale hemp production operating from similar small canabaria (hemplands) grouped around tenements and gardens.<sup>514</sup> Butcher also recorded small scale evidence of hemp production for the maritime industry at Lowestoft in a survey of 1618.<sup>515</sup> Evidence of small scale hemplands are found within a survey of the manor of Covehithe dated

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<sup>509</sup> Clive Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention: Testimentary Evidence Reconsidered', in *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1990), 204.

<sup>510</sup> Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, 1:160.

<sup>511</sup> Nesta Evans, *The East Anglian Linen Industry: Rural Industry and Local Economy 1500-1850*, Pasold Studies in Textile History 5 (Aldershot: Gower, 1985), 18.

<sup>512</sup> Richard Strangman, 1579, and William Charroulde, 1587, Appendix 1.

<sup>513</sup> Hemp had been declared a tithe crop in the Middle Ages. Tim Holt-Wilson, *A Plant of Contention: An Exhibition Illustrating the History of Hemp* (Essex: University of Essex, 1998); Sequestration accounts, c1593-1597 or c1601-1603, DN/SEQ7/1, NRO.

<sup>514</sup> Will of Robert Smythe of Southold (sic), 1541, PROB 11/28/567, TNA; Warner, *Bloody Marsh*, 31, 33.

<sup>515</sup> Butcher, *Lowestoft, 1550-1750*, 211-12.

1626, and a number of retting pools, used during the processing of hemp, have also been located there during archaeological investigations.<sup>516</sup>

### Iceland ventures: trading and fishing

Previous studies charting the development of trade and fishing links between Iceland and England have attempted to unravel the complex narrative provided by Icelandic annals, royal proclamations, statutes and the fragmented evidence left by early mariners and merchants.<sup>517</sup> Jones acknowledges that 'confusion surrounds the history of England's early modern Icelandic fishery'.<sup>518</sup> Whilst it is acknowledged that Anglo-Icelandic relations date back to the colonization of Iceland in the ninth century, when Scandinavian settlers came from Norway (some had lived in the British Isles and brought their Celtic slaves with them), the dates of the first trading and fishing voyages vary.<sup>519</sup> A Norfolk fisherman from Cromer, named Robert Bacon, is often credited with 'discovering Iceland' in the early fifteenth century, and the first documented evidence in Icelandic sources of English fishermen off the coast of Iceland occurs in 1412.<sup>520</sup> Earlier voyages of vessels from East Anglia to Iceland or its waters for stockfish probably did occur but went mainly unrecorded. In 1330-1 at Easton, there is evidence that the manorial lord bought five hundred 'mulvell', which

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<sup>516</sup> Survey of the manor of Northales, 1608 (with additions of 1606, 1626), NRA17140 Russell/Box 793, BA; Lewis and Ranson, 'Fieldwalking at Covehithe, Suffolk, January 2015', 20.

<sup>517</sup> For an account based on Icelandic annals see, Knut Gjerst, *History of Iceland* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1924), 257-66; This thesis is based on Icelandic original sources, Bjorn Porsteinsson, 'The English Century In The History Of The Icelanders' (PhD, Iceland, Reykjavik, 1970); For the definitive early pioneering work see, Eleanor Carus-Wilson, 'The Iceland Trade', in *Studies In English Trade In The Fifteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1933), 155-82; For more contemporary studies see, Anna Agnarsdottir, 'Iceland's "English Century" and East Anglia's North Sea World', in *East Anglia and Its North Sea World*, ed. David Bates and Robert Liddiard (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), 204-16; Evan T. Jones, 'Charting the World of English Fishermen in Early Modern Iceland', *The Mariner's Mirror* 90, no. 4 (2004): 398-409; Evan T. Jones, 'England's Icelandic Fishery in the Early Modern Period', in *England's Sea Fisheries: The Commercial Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300*, ed. David Starkey, John Ramster, and Christopher Reid (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000); Mark Gardiner, 'The Character of Commercial Fishing In Icelandic Waters In The Fifteenth Century', in *Cod and Herring: The Archaeology and History of Medieval Sea Fishing* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2016), 80-90; Anne F. Sutton, 'East Coast Ports and the Iceland Trade, 1483-5 (1489): Protection and Compensation', in *Medieval Merchants and Money, Essays in Honour of James L. Bolton*, ed. Martin Allen and Matthew Davies (London: University of London Press, 2016), 159-76.

<sup>518</sup> Jones, 'England's Icelandic Fishery', 105.

<sup>519</sup> Agnarsdottir, 'Iceland's "English Century" and East Anglia's North Sea World', 205.

<sup>520</sup> In 1412 the Nyi annall tells of fishermen from England arriving off Portland on the Icelandic south coast. J. TH. Thor, 'Foreign Fisheries Off Iceland, c.1400-1800', in *The North Sea and Culture (1550-1800)*, *Proceedings of the International Conference Held at Leiden 21-22 April 1995* (Hilversum: Verloren Publishers, 1996), 125; Carus-Wilson, 'The Iceland Trade', 173; Agnarsdottir, 'Iceland's "English Century" and East Anglia's North Sea World', 206.

he acquired locally; these were ‘stockfish’, Icelandic cod, line-caught then decapitated, gutted and air dried.<sup>521</sup> It could be that batch of stockfish was supplied by the Norwegians, who were known to sell it to English merchants at Bergen, in the period prior to their expulsion by the Hansa.<sup>522</sup>

Whatever the origins of the Icelandic fisheries, by the end of 1410s, English vessels were undertaking both trading enterprises and fishing around the coast of Iceland, although it was difficult to make a distinction ‘between those who traded for fish and those who themselves caught fish’.<sup>523</sup> In addition, ‘the precise mechanism by which the English saw an opportunity to make money was not clear’.<sup>524</sup> The term ‘Iceland’s English Century’ has been used to describe the fifteenth century and the commercial success between the two countries. The period 1436-1484 is highlighted as evidence of this success, when 124 ships visited Iceland as the result of 98 licences issued to merchants from the ports of Bristol, Hull and Lynn.<sup>525</sup> Evidence of a trading expedition to Iceland, from the north east Suffolk port of Walberswick is recorded in 1451 and in 1484 ships from Suffolk and Norfolk were directed by a proclamation to travel to Iceland in convoy.<sup>526</sup> Fishermen from Ipswich were making voyages in 1487 and by the start of the sixteenth century merchants in the town had developed a ‘mutually beneficial exchange of fish and goods’, which ‘flourished in the hands of the next generation’ including Henry Tooley.<sup>527</sup> Jones states that 1490-1530 was the main period of Icelandic fishing interest for the English, which is in direct contrast to that raised traditionally by Carus-Wilson who stated that by the beginning of the sixteenth century it had declined due to Hansa merchants from Hamberg and Lubeck forcing English merchants out of the trade.<sup>528</sup> Jones argues that it was the smaller east Anglian ports which developed their Icelandic enterprises successfully, as the larger

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<sup>521</sup> V5/19/1/1.1.

<sup>522</sup> Peter Fleming, ‘Icelanders in England in the Fifteenth Century’, in *Resident Aliens in Later Medieval England*, Studies in European Urban History (1100-1800) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 77.

<sup>523</sup> Jones, ‘England’s Icelandic Fishery’, 106; Williams, *Maritime Trade, 1550-1590*, 87.

<sup>524</sup> Fleming, ‘Icelanders in England’, 77.

<sup>525</sup> Jones, Jones, ‘England’s Icelandic Fishery’, 106; Quoting, Wendy R. Childs, ‘England’s Icelandic Trade in the Fifteenth Century: The Role of the Port of Hull’, in *Northern Seas Yearbook* (Esbjerg: Association for the History of the Northern Seas, 1995), 18.

<sup>526</sup> Thomas Gardner, *An Historical Account of Dunwich* (London: Privately, 1754), 145. The listing of 13 barks trading to Iceland, Farra and North Sea cannot be confirmed as the surviving Churchwardens Accounts for Walberswick have suffered damage and the conserved volume does not include the first pages dated from 1451 which Gardner has used for this statement, Walberswick Churchwardens Accounts, 1450-1499, FC185/E1/1, SA; Gardiner, ‘Commercial Fishing In Icelandic Waters’, 85. Gardiner references this as Letter and Papers of Richard III and Henry VII, 2, 287.

<sup>527</sup> Amor, *Late Medieval Ipswich*, 181-90; Webb, *Great Tooley of Ipswich*, 71-88.

<sup>528</sup> Jones, ‘England’s Icelandic Fishery’, 105; Carus-Wilson, ‘The Iceland Trade’, 177-82.

more commercial ports withdrew, and an Anglo-Danish treaty of 1490 eased restrictions on the English visiting Iceland.<sup>529</sup> For the creeks of Easton Bavents, Walberswick and Southwold the surviving evidential traces of fishing and trading ventures to Iceland, left by the merchants and mariners provide support for Jones' argument .

In 1508 Harry Brankaster of Easton Bavents, in writing his will, stated that he was a 'maryner preposing with godds grace to sayle unto Iselond'.<sup>530</sup> This is the first direct reference within the extant Easton probate records of a voyage to Iceland. Between this date and 1550 a further four direct references of voyages to Iceland occur within the Easton probate records, although it must be noted that evidence from the probate records, by its nature, is fragmentary.<sup>531</sup> Evidence of Iceland is only generally recorded when a mariner died during the voyage, after having written a will at the outset of such a voyage or a merchant was aware, when death was near, that he had ships and ventures outstanding in Iceland and noted such assets in his will. Thomas Mower, of Southwold had a ship in Iceland in 1508 called the *Barthilmowe* which he decreed to be sold when it returned home.<sup>532</sup> The Southwold merchant William Godell wrote his will in 1509 and his wishes also included that 'his merchant ships in Iceland were to be sold, unless his wife chose to have one, plus all his fish to come out of Iceland also be sold'.<sup>533</sup> Another Southwold merchant, Richard Bisshop, again having his will proven in 1510 declared that his 'half ship in Iceland and all other adventures there be sold' and then he bequeathed to his wife his 'three other boats that be in Iceland and the doles that come thereof'.<sup>534</sup> John Cornelyce, boatmaster of Easton, originally from Brabant, and previously discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, wrote his will in July 1510 and his wife was to receive upon his death his 'doole which I have in Iseland with Herry Stephenson'.<sup>535</sup> This cluster of testamentary evidence suggests that these Iceland voyages were financed by the Southwold merchants who provided some of the ships and their provisioning, with mariners such as Harry Brankaster and possibly John Cornelyce, running the risk of the voyages themselves as masters of the vessels. John Cornelyce owned at least two vessels and may therefore have been

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<sup>529</sup> Webb, *Great Tooley of Ipswich*, 71. Chapter IV 'By the Grace of God Icelandward', provides in depth detail around the mechanics and operation of the Iceland voyages. See 71-92. .

<sup>530</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>531</sup> John Cornelyce, 1510, SA; Robert Stary, 1510; William Carding, 1551; John Leske, 1552, Appendix 1.

<sup>532</sup> Will of Thomas Mower, 1508, IC/AA2/5/25, SA.

<sup>533</sup> Will of William Godell, 1509, PROB 11/16/440, TNA.

<sup>534</sup> Will of Richard Bisshop, 1510, PROB 11/16/806, TNA.

<sup>535</sup> Will of John Cornelyce, 1510, IC/AA2/5/183, SA.

undertaking the voyage as master of his own vessel. In the wills of both Cornelyce and Brankaster mention is made of the guild of 'Our Lady' at Easton Bavents and it is feasible that part of the finance for the voyage came from this source. Cornelyce left the sum of 20s to the guild whilst Brancaster's original will was endorsed 'I owe the towne 13s and 4d and our ladys guild 16s and 8d – I have payed [the guild] 10s 11d'. Further evidence of mariners from this part of the coastline taking part in Iceland voyages occurred in 1515 and 1516 when Robert Rede from Dunwich wrote his will 'partibus in Iseland' and two men from Covehithe died whilst at sea in the 'Yselond ffare'.<sup>536</sup>

Voyages continued to Iceland, from mainly Norfolk and Suffolk ports and creeks, along with assorted threats to the fleet from the Scots. The importance of the voyages to the local economy was evident in 1523 when the Earl of Surrey wrote to Thomas Wolsey to inform him and the King that he had heard 'the Scots are going to set forth six or seven ships to the Islands, to intercept the Iceland fleet on their way home. If they succeed the coasts of Norfolk and Suffolk will be undone, and all England destitute of fish next year'.<sup>537</sup> A document located within the state papers of 1528 recorded the numbers of vessels engaged 'for Yslond' in a 'Then and Now' scenario (**Table 18**).<sup>538</sup> Lincolnshire returned only 4 ships, all from Boston; Norfolk returned 76 and Suffolk 49. With 46% of the Suffolk vessels (21% of the overall total) originating from the port of Dunwich and its associated creeks of Walberswick, Southwold, Easton and Covehithe it is evident that the Iceland trade was of great importance on that part of the coastline in 1528. The 'Now' scenario figures c.1553, show a decrease from 149 to 43 and the figure for each grouping of ports and creeks has shrunk in general by two thirds but Dunwich and its creeks still account for c.50% of the Suffolk fleet.

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<sup>536</sup> Will of Robert Rede of Donwico (Dunwich), 1515, Briggs 16, NRO; Richard Gravener and Robert Pylgryme made their wills from their berths whilst 'upon the sea in Yselond ffare, fishing for cod'. Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:77.

<sup>537</sup> 'Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 3, 1519-1523. Edited by J S Brewer (London, 1867), 1292', British History Online, accessed 21 August 2024, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol3>.

<sup>538</sup> The document is headed 20th Henry VIII (April 1528-April 1529) and has been quoted in earlier works as a list of that date. A later return of shipping marked as 'undated' in the state papers for 1553 compares figures of shipping for 1528 with those for 1553 and appears to use these 1528 figures. 'Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530, Ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875)', British History Online, 5101, accessed 12 February 2024, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2208-2254>; 'Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1601-3 With Addenda 1547-65. Edited by Mary Anne Everett Green. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office 1870.', British History Online, 426, accessed 12 February 2024, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/edw-eliz/addenda/1547-65>.

In 1533 a 'certificate of the number of shippes returned out of Islond this year', lists 85 ships along with details of the vessels 'name and portage, name of owners, masters and adventurers'.<sup>539</sup> The vessels have been designated as coming from the port where they have gathered and been enumerated as such for the certificate and for ports such as London, Lynne, Yarmouth and Lowestoft, this is assumed to be correct. The vessels at Dunwich haven have traditionally been erroneously designated as all originating from Dunwich or in some cases as from Dunwich and presumably Southwold and Walberswick.<sup>540</sup> However, closer examination of the certificate reveals that some of the vessels recorded as at Dunwich haven also state the port or creek of origin. This information, allied with nominal linkage to the 1524 Lay Subsidy returns has allowed an assignment of origin to the smaller creeks for the 22 listed at Dunwich. Analysis of the 'portage' for each vessel reveals that those from Covehithe, Walberswick and Dunwich were all under 50 tonnes, whilst those from Easton, and half from Southwold were all 50 tonnes. The smaller boats, usually referred to as dogger-boats came under the supervision of a skave-master who oversaw the fishing operation.<sup>541</sup> For further details of the breakdown of the Iceland fleet for 1528, 1533, c.1553 (**Table 18**) and for details of the 22 vessels 'at Dunwich haven' in 1533 (**Table 19**).

The *Trinitie* of Easton Bavents, recorded in the 1533 fleet, was one of several vessels owned by James Sponer of Easton Bavents, a merchant listed as both owner of the vessel and merchant or adventurer of the voyage.<sup>542</sup> Master for the voyage was Thomas Alcock, another Easton man, who, when he died the following year, made no mention in his will of his occupation or his connections with the Iceland fishing trips, which illustrates how the probate material cannot be relied upon to yield all the significant information about the details of a testator's activities.<sup>543</sup> James Sponer's son, Richard Sponer was listed as master of the *Cecile*, a Southwold vessel, owned by William Barker. The vessel *Cyssely* (Cecile) had been left to William Barker in his

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<sup>539</sup> A certificate of the ships returned out of Iceland, 1533, SP 1/80, ff's 59-73, TNA. The term 'adventurer' is used in the context of financier of the voyage.

<sup>540</sup> Examples include, Ernest Read Cooper, 'The Dunwich Iceland Ships', *Mariner's Mirror* 25, no. 2 (1939): 171; Hervey Benham, *The Codbangers* (Colchester: Essex County Newspapers Ltd, 1979), 16; Gardiner, 'Commercial Fishing in Icelandic Waters', 8.

<sup>541</sup> An explanation of the term tonne as the carrying capacity of each vessel is given here. Butcher, *Medieval Lowestoft*, 293; For further details of Dogger-boats and usage see, Butcher, *Rigged for River and Sea*, 53, 177; Webb, *Great Tooley of Ipswich*, 81.

<sup>542</sup> The term adventurer has been used in the title description and the term merchant used in the main text of the document

<sup>543</sup> Appendix 1.

father's will, proven in 1525, along with another ship described as a 'grete bote'.<sup>544</sup> William acted as an executor along with James Sponer illustrating the strong links operating within the maritime communities at this time. All the vessel owners at Dunwich haven are also listed as the 'adventurers' for the voyage. This was not the case at most of the other ports and creeks where in many cases, owners and merchants' names differ and it is assumed that these vessels were hired by the merchant for the duration of the voyage.

Why did the Iceland fleet from the north-east Suffolk creeks mass at Dunwich haven on their return, was it just for enumeration? An examination of select probate documents from Dunwich merchants for 1521-1549 reveals the existence of an area near to Dunwich harbour described as the 'dam or dam-side'.<sup>545</sup> Wills left by the merchants describe 'my 'takillhouse standing by the dam-side' and '2 takylhouses at the dam' and 'timber and planks lying in my yard and in the pytt at the dam'.<sup>546</sup> These are clear indications of shore based ancillary buildings and workings which would be used by fishermen and traders and in all probability the Icelandic fleet to unload and process their cargoes, including fish. The word 'tackle' is of Dutch origin and relates to maritime gear.<sup>547</sup> The largest vessels were only of 50 tunnage which correlates with the size of vessel the creek of Dunwich could accommodate as discussed earlier under the requisitioning of vessels by the Crown. Whilst there is no direct link between the merchants whose wills were examined and immigrants from the Low Countries it is feasible that 'dam-side' was a wharf area at Dunwich which originated with the influx of immigrants from the Low Countries between 1440 and 1524.<sup>548</sup>

Litigation within the chancery courts for the period 1534-41 provides further evidence of the Icelandic voyages of the north-east Suffolk coastal mariners and merchants, along with links to those from Easton Bavents in commercial matters. In 1534,

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<sup>544</sup> Will of Robert Barker of Southwold, 1525, PROB 11/22/35, TNA.

<sup>545</sup> Will of Peter Moreff, 1521, PROB 11/20/378; Thomas Kelyng, 1523, PROB 11/21/76; Thomas Halydaie, 1537, PROB 11/26/99; George Copynne, 1545, PROB 11/30/455; William Witchingham, 1549, PROB 1549, all of Dunwich, PCC, TNA.

<sup>546</sup> Wills of Moreff, Halydaie and Copynne, as above.

<sup>547</sup> 'Takel', Middle English Compendium, accessed 25 July 2024, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED44417>.

<sup>548</sup> In a letter addressed to Master Deye, in which the chronicler John Stow describes the history of Dunwich, mention is made of 'the Keye called the Dame, where the shippes lye'. Suckling, *History and Antiquities of Suffolk*, 2:245. Suckling has incorrectly transcribed the word as Daine, rather than Dame. Thanks to Keith Briggs for bringing the correct spelling to my attention; In Evendens work on John Day his close ties with the Dutch stranger church and his son using a Dutch signature are discussed as possible evidence of his possible foreign origin. Elizabeth Evenden, 'Patents And Patronage: The Life And Career Of John Day, Tudor Printer' (PhD, York, University of York, 2002), 24-25.

Thomas Lappage of Ipswich brought a case against John Jetor of Lowestoft after Jetor had seized the ship *Thomas*, at Lowestoft, as a bargaining tool, because Jetor had hired another ship (the *James*) from Thomas whose anchors and cables had proved insufficient for the Iceland fisheries.<sup>549</sup> Lappage was listed as merchant of a vessel in the Orwell whilst Jetor was given as merchant of three vessels at Lowestoft, including one called the *James*. It is assumed therefore that the *James* must have survived the Iceland trip even though its equipment was substandard. Jetor had commercial connections with Robert Lee of Easton Bavents. In November 1533 Lee's will was proven, and along with the many fishing nets he bequeathed, he stated that he owed 'John Jetor of leystoft' 9s and a barell of peche' (pitch) and a John Jettour, in 1532 was amerced for 3d as he owed suit of court for a freeholding of the manor of Easton Bavents.<sup>550</sup> Lee had written his will in January 1533, in the presence of Thomas Alcock, one of the witnesses. Alcock was master on the *Trinitie* of Easton for the Icelandic voyage that year and it is feasible that Lee perished whilst on the said voyage or upon his return. The economic and personal linkages of the men illustrate the close connections operating between the mariners engaged in the Icelandic ventures.

Thomas Spanton was a freeholder who in 1532 owed amerced suit to the Easton manorial court and was one of 10 Southwold men who provided depositions regarding a dispute between the Southwold merchant William Stanton, and a William Fulcher (of Southwold) and William Thedam (of Lowestoft) who had an agreement with Stanton to hire his vessel the *Christopher* for an Icelandic voyage.<sup>551</sup> Stanton reneged on his agreement and refused to deliver the ship and the two sued for loss of the profits of the voyage. William Byrd, of Southwold, a shipping master of over 20 years confirmed that Stanton had told him about the agreement whilst in London and along with Spanton and four others also confirmed that they had 'been to Iselond diverse tymes'.<sup>552</sup> Stanton had close family links with James Sponer, the Easton Bavents merchant whose vessel and son sailed in 1533. Sponer left bequests for each of William Stanton's children, Stanton's first wife was Sponer's sister, and William himself was appointed executor to Sponer's will in 1537.<sup>553</sup> This litigation evidences

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<sup>549</sup> Chancery pleadings, 1534, C1/842/13-16, TNA.

<sup>550</sup> Appendix 1; Court roll, 1532/3, NRA17140/Box793/10, BA.

<sup>551</sup> SP 1/99 fos.148-153, 26 Dec 1535, TNA; Will of William Thedam, 1559, PROB 11/42A/218, TNA; Will of William Fulcher, 1553, Administration book, 1549-1555, f. 194, NRO.

<sup>552</sup> William Wylliamsom, Robert Dorman, William Crane, Richard Cutbert, Deposition Statements, 26 Dec 1535, SP 1/99 fos.148-153, TNA.

<sup>553</sup> Appendix 1

mercantile links with London, close familial ties between the local merchants and provides strong evidence of close working relationships between the main Icelandic mercantile players from the small north-east Suffolk ports, including Easton Bavents.

The presence of English mariners in Iceland was not always peaceful and there are many references to violent incidents involving the Danish governors of Iceland or the Hanseatic merchants.<sup>554</sup> One other area of confrontation was the alleged trading by the English of Icelandic children and youths into slavery. It is evident that children and youths were brought back to England from Iceland with children being offered for sale in Lynn in 1429.<sup>555</sup> Icelandic children also appear to have been sold by their parents or duped into accepting money for them, perhaps with the promise of the child being offered a new life in a new land.<sup>556</sup> In 1490 an Anglo-Danish treaty banned Icelanders from hiring themselves out as servants or sailors on foreign ships.<sup>557</sup> A single extant volume of 'Examinations of Proceedings before the Vice Admiral of Norfolk and Suffolk' for the year 1536-1537 contains many references to Iceland voyages of the local mariners and fishermen and within it references of Icelandic children.<sup>558</sup> At Yarmouth one such boy was apprenticed as a seaman for thirteen years and it is this action of apprenticeship or fostering which may account for some of the alleged kidnappings or child sales.<sup>559</sup> In the Admiralty Court of 1536-7 it was recorded that 'they say that Edward Burell of Eston this laste year browght a chylde from Orkney a bowte 15 years of age'.<sup>560</sup> The Orkney Islands were used by the English mariners on their way to and from Iceland, and here too skirmishes were recorded with the Orcadians.<sup>561</sup>

How long did the interest in the Icelandic trade last? Henry Tooley, one of the leading Icelandic merchants from Ipswich was said not to be interested in Iceland post 1536, when records of his mercantile ventures there ceased to be recorded, probably due

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<sup>554</sup> Fleming, 'Icelanders in England', 79; Sutton, 'East Coast Ports and the Iceland Trade, 1483-5 (1489)', 169-74; Gardiner, 'Commercial Fishing in Icelandic Waters'; Agnarsdottir, 'Iceland's "English Century" and East Anglia's North Sea World', 214-15.

<sup>555</sup> Carus-Wilson, 'The Iceland Trade', 166-67.

<sup>556</sup> Fleming, 'Icelanders in England', 80.

<sup>557</sup> The Iceland Voyage of the Fishermen of Suffolk, notes by Gwen Dyke, n.d., HD1643/4/28, SA.

<sup>558</sup> Examination of Proceedings, 1536-1537, HCA13/1, TNA. A complete transcription of this volume would provide further valuable evidence of the maritime trade on the Norfolk and Suffolk coasts during this year. Time did not allow such a transcription for the compilation of this thesis.

<sup>559</sup> Fleming, 'Icelanders in England', 81.

<sup>560</sup> HCA13/1, f.82, TNA.

<sup>561</sup> W. S. Hewison, *This Great Harbour, Scapa Flow*, 4th ed. (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2005), 16.

to the perceived hazards.<sup>562</sup> Similarly, Jones states the Icelandic trade went into decline during the 1530s. However, fishing and trading voyages continued from the small east coast ports into the 1540s and 1550s, although the extent of the venture is impossible to reconstruct. The wills of Robert Burward, mariner, and William Rooke, merchant, both of Walberswick provide evidence of the value of the vessels continuing in the trade. In 1539 Rooke had 'a new shippe in Yslonde' valued at £78 together with an older vessel called the *Mathew* at £74.<sup>563</sup> Burward, in 1542, valued his vessel the *Mary Katherine*, which is 'in Iselonde', at £100.<sup>564</sup> Profits from the venture, for those investing money to provision and kit out the vessels (recorded at 20-25% interest rates for the six-month voyages), have been calculated at £700.<sup>565</sup> This high interest rate has been cited as grim evidence of the high proportion of ships that never made it home.

At Orfordness in 1545, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, wrote to Lord Paget regarding the protection of the coast against invasion and stated that he had 'ridden all along the sea coasts of Norfolk and Suffolk....the men of the coasts are all mariners and either have gone to sea to serve the King or else into Iselond'.<sup>566</sup> This is confirmation that the voyages were still of importance to the economies of the small ports and as evidenced previously, it is known that 43 ships sailed c.1553, with those from Dunwich and its associated creeks comprising nearly 50% of that total.<sup>567</sup>

Probate records for Easton Bavents men, for the period 1550-1552, confirm their continued involvement in the voyages. Robert Stary wrote his will in January 1550 and owned both a 'Coole' (Coal) boat and a boat in Iceland. The Iceland boat was owned in partnership with Adam Blowse of Southwold and Stary's share, along with half a dole of fish which he was expecting to come from the Iceland voyage of that year, was left to his wife Katherine.<sup>568</sup> Stary also stated that Blowse was to pay the money to his wife immediately after the 'Rake Fare next following'.<sup>569</sup> William Cardyng's will written in 1551 mentioned his brother 'coming out of Iceland' and later

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<sup>562</sup> Tooley had north-east Suffolk connections in that he was possibly born at Corton, and his sisters married men from Beccles and Great Yarmouth. Webb, *Great Tooley of Ipswich*, 2, 19, 90-91.

<sup>563</sup> Will of William Rooke, 1539, PROB 11/26/270, TNA.

<sup>564</sup> Will of Robert Burward, 1542, PROB 11/29/234, TNA.

<sup>565</sup> Bottomley, *A Short History*, 6; Jones, 'England's Icelandic Fishery', 14.

<sup>566</sup> Letter to Lord Paget, 1545, SP 1/202, f.202, TNA.

<sup>567</sup> 'Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1601-3 With Addenda 1547-65. Edited by Mary Anne Everett Green. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office 1870.', 426.

<sup>568</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>569</sup> Rek(e) fare is a term used along the Suffolk coast for the Iceland voyages, possibly derived from the Reyknes Peninsula, a place English fishermen used to dry fish. Butcher, *Rigged for River and Sea*, 154.

in the will he bequeathed this brother John, half his 'Iseland doole'.<sup>570</sup> It is known that John Cardy owned half a boat with Robert Amis but he did not return from the Iceland voyage that year as his administration was proven later in 1551.<sup>571</sup> The last Easton Bavents will to mention specifically Iceland was that of John Leske, written in 1552.<sup>572</sup> Leske left his wife his 'boote that is now in ysland called the *martyn* with her apparel and the profytes of her dole'. From these wills it is evident that some Easton men were not undertaking the voyages themselves, their role being owner or part owner of a vessel, although others, such as John Cardye were making the dangerous long voyages.

Vessels from Lowestoft, Southwold and Walberswick continued to undertake the Iceland voyages during the second half of the sixteenth century and well into the seventeenth, however there is no evidence of any involvement of vessels assigned to Easton post 1552.<sup>573</sup> Fishermen and mariners of Easton may have continued to be hired to undertake the voyages on vessels from other ports and creeks, but the absence of any explicit reference to Easton vessels in Iceland after 1552 is consistent with the earlier evidence of its economic decline and the deterioration of the haven of Easton itself.

### **Southampton trade**

The transcribed Port Books of Southampton, 1427-1436, provide useful evidence relating to the trading voyages of vessels from the north-east Suffolk creeks (**Table 20**).<sup>574</sup> Due to the select nature of the dates of the Port Book transcripts it is not possible to re-construct when the voyages first started or indeed when they exactly ceased. Vessels from Easton, Covehithe and Southwold travelled together along the southern coast, which is revealed by the way in which their vessels docked in Southampton at the same time, to off-load red herring and barrels of herring and leave the port loaded up with cargoes of rye, fruit, iron, wine and furs. Covehithe supplied

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<sup>570</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>571</sup> Admin of John Cardye, 1551, Administration Book 1549-1555 f. 97, NRO. Robert Amis, in his will of 1541 bequeaths his half of a boat he owns with John Cardy to his wife Agnes. Will of Robert Amis, 1541, IC/AA2/13/322, SA. William Cardyng and John Cardy are brothers although there is variance in the spelling of their names within the probate records.

<sup>572</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>573</sup> Butcher, *Lowestoft, 1550-1750*, 172-73.

<sup>574</sup> Studer, *The Port Books of Southampton 1427-1430*; Brian Foster, ed., *The Local Port Book of Southampton for 1435-36*, vol. VII, Southampton Records Series (Southampton: Southampton University press, 1963).

the most vessels of the three, with five being recorded in 1430. This implies that economically it was the more successful creek of the three at this time which is in line with the economic data discussed in Chapter 4.

It is impossible from the transcribed extant records to unpick the finer elements of how these trading ventures were structured, but it appears that smoked and barrelled herring, caught in the previous autumn fishing season, were taken to Southampton with merchants or middle men involved in the financing of these cargos of fish and of the subsequent cargos, taken on board at Southampton. Below the name of the master of the vessel, in what appears to be the same custom entry, other names often appear, listed with details of cargo and valuations. The nature of these entries imply that various merchants financed different parts of the cargo, and nominal evidence in a select few cases provides connections with local Suffolk merchants. For example, in 1427-28 John Terry, master of the *John of Estone*, brought into Southampton, nine lasts of herring and a barrel of herring. In the same entry John Chanterel of 'Suthewold' was listed as paying customs dues on three lasts of herring, which implies he had financed that part of the cargo.<sup>575</sup> Terry left port with 60 quarters of rye, presumably to take back to Suffolk to sell on behalf of himself and/or Chanterel. In January 1430, John Terry returned with more herring and left with six barrels of osmund, with a value of £3, presumably bound for his home port of Easton Bavents.<sup>576</sup> Evidence of litigation between John Terry, shipman and Richard Skylman, the Southwold merchant and stockfishmonger, occurred in 1427 within the Common Plea rolls indicting local mercantile linkages.<sup>577</sup> Osmund was used for making fish-hooks, many thousands of which were used in long-line fishing in the North Sea and in Iceland to catch cod and ling. Henry Clubbard, of 'Estone', was clearly linked with the cargo of herring, brought to Southampton in February 1436, in the *Thomas of Southwold*, under the master Thomas Metcharp.<sup>578</sup> Clubbard's father Richard, in his will dated 1447, bequeathed four separate houses including his 'new house', along with quantities of 'bond land' and asked Sir John Hevenygham to be his supervisor.<sup>579</sup> This, along with litigation for various debts owed in the period 1421-1445, and the listing of two alien servants in his household in 1440, indicated that the Clubbards

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<sup>575</sup> In the footnote to this entry Estone has incorrectly been identified as Easton near Portland in Devon, whilst Suthwold has correctly been identified as Southwold, Suffolk. Studer, *The Port Books of Southampton 1427-1430*, 19.

<sup>576</sup> Osmund was a high-quality iron, imported from Sweden and the Baltic states, used to make fish-hooks. Butcher, *Rigged for River and Sea*, 135.

<sup>577</sup> 'CP40 Indices', CP40/664, 1427, f.212, 702.

<sup>578</sup> Foster, *Port Book Southampton 1435-36*, VII:32.

<sup>579</sup> Appendix 1.

were of some standing within the vill at this date and were acting in a mercantile capacity.<sup>580</sup> As discussed earlier in this chapter, John Pope master of the *George of Easton*, at Southampton in 1430, was found with his vessel of 30 tonnes eight years later at Poole in 1438. It had been requisitioned for a campaign in France and again demonstrates examples of the versatility of the small craft operating at this date.

For Easton, there are no subsequent listings of vessels within the Port Book for Southampton, dated 1439-40 although vessels are listed from Southwold and Walberswick.<sup>581</sup> In 1430 the Covehithe vessels the *James* and *Christofre* left with osmund, beaver fur worth three nobles, and wine. It is likely that these products were being returned directly to north-east Suffolk. For example, in the 1440s the bailiff for John Hopton, Easton's manorial lord, was recorded as purchasing 'four barrels of osmond, three barrels of haberdashery, two furs, 200 rosyn and four dozen pattens' from one Gervaise Nutkin, out of a ship called the *Mary Knight* in the 1440s. The bailiff also paid £40 to John Young of Portsmouth for 15 'pokes wodde' out of a ship called the *Julian* whose master was Thomas Buckland.<sup>582</sup> John Cooke, junior, of Easton died in 1456 at Portsmouth whilst on a voyage which included both fishing and trading elements. An account of his outstanding debts was included with his probate administration, which detailed amounts owing to Richard Felaw, merchant, of Gippeswick (Ipswich) as well as debts of the vessel the *Katryn* of Easton and amounts for the 'dreyang of nets at Leystoft' (Lowestoft).<sup>583</sup> Felaw was a merchant with connections in overseas trade and the export of wool, as well as being a commercial agent for Sir John Howard, later Duke of Norfolk.<sup>584</sup> In 1460, Felaw was also involved in litigation surrounding debts owed to him, by merchants and mariners from Easton, Southwold, Yarmouth and Lowestoft, in six consecutively listed cases. The executors of Robert Hopton, gentleman of Southwold and brother of John Hopton, manorial lord of Easton, appeared alongside a case against William Smyth, mariner, and Peter Westwynd, an alien mariner both of Easton.<sup>585</sup> Hence there are clear indications that

<sup>580</sup> Examples include, 'CP40 Indices', CP40/641, 1421, f.918; CP40/676, 1435, f.412 (x3); CP40/736, 1445, f.1752; Servants named Johan Neve and Richard Symmyssone, Alien subsidy, 1440, E179/180/92, pt 2, m.12, TNA.

<sup>581</sup> Cobb, *The Local Port Book of Southampton for 1439-40*.

<sup>582</sup> The account is found in the Account book of Nicholas Grenehalg, 1444-1456, HA30/369/46 7v., SA; Richmond, *John Hopton*, 146.

<sup>583</sup> Appendix 1. It is probable that John Cook's father also died on the voyage as another administration exists for John Cook of Easton Bawents, 1456, 2 Brosyard, NCC, NRO.

<sup>584</sup> Amor, *Late Medieval Ipswich*, 249.

<sup>585</sup> 'CP40 Indices', CP40/799, 1460, f.1882, 1883.

Richard Felaw of Ipswich had varied mercantile connections with, and had supplied finance for ventures at, and from, Easton and Southwold.

### **London and the Calais Staple**

The London Customs Accounts, currently transcribed and published online for the period 1380-1540, provide a valuable insight into English trade to Calais, because after 1353 all wool exported from the country had to be channelled through the Staple at Calais and because London acquired a growing share of both that trade, and international trade in general, over the course of the late Middle Ages. Therefore, they offer another perspective on the mariners and merchants from the smaller north-east Suffolk creeks.<sup>586</sup> The customs accounts provide information relating to the dates and frequency of voyages, cargoes carried and nominal linking evidence for vessels, masters and merchants from Kirkley, Pakefield, Covehithe, Easton, Southwold, Walberswick and Dunwich. The Wool Customs and Subsidy Accounts provide dates of convoys of vessels gathered at London, laden with wool and woolfells, bound for the Staple at Calais. It is clear from the convoys departing on the same dates that often vessels from these seven parishes had gathered in London at the same time and therefore had travelled together down the coast from Suffolk, in various groupings. The accounts contain some surprises; for example, several vessels are listed as 'of Kirkley', a parish with no known evidence of a fleet of vessels at this date, whereas only four vessels are listed from the larger port of Lowestoft. For details of evidence of vessels at the port of London awaiting embarkation for Calais see **Table 21**. There are a few years in the custom accounts where no wool customs and subsidy accounts survive, or the designation of vessels names was not given and in some cases the documents have suffered damage and are illegible. The years when this was most prevalent were 1461-1477 and 1502-1507.

The first vessels from the smaller east coast ports to be recorded were the *Katerine* and *Margareta* of Dunwich and the *Christofous* of Southwold, in June 1446, with seven making the voyage by 1458, the majority being conducted in the months of March, April and May. The first vessel to be recorded from Easton was in 1488, the *Nycholas* under the master and merchant John Cornelis (Cornelyce), an immigrant, originally from Brabant who has been discussed earlier. It was a year when fifteen vessels made the voyages from London to Calais in three different convoys. On

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<sup>586</sup> 'The London Customs Accounts'.

March 31<sup>st</sup>, 'fleet L2' was listed ready for departure with its load of wool and wool-fells. The *Nycholas*, one of twenty-five vessels listed in the convoy, had a cargo of 24 ½ 'sacci and 12 clavi of *lane* plus 7,999 *pelles lanute*.<sup>587</sup> Wool was exported either as shorn wool (*lane*), which was sold by the sack or of wool-fells (*pelles lanute*) which were the sheepskins with wool still on them, with 240 wool-fells equating to a sack of shorn wool.<sup>588</sup> The four Southwold vessels, also in the convoy, carried similar cargo weights of wool and skins and therefore were probably of the same tonnage. During the three voyages in March and August 1488, the fifteen north-east Suffolk vessels carried 313 sacks of shorn wool from approximately 75,000 sheep plus 97,189 wool-fells to Calais.<sup>589</sup> On average, each vessel was carrying wool from around 5,000 shorn sheep and 6,480 wool-fells. It is unclear how much of this wool had been brought in the ships from north-east Suffolk and how much was supplied in London from other parts of the country. The quality and quantity of Suffolk wool was not especially high by national standards, so the indication is that the ships' cargo was being topped up in the capital. It is possible that some of the wool had been picked up on the voyage down the east coast from Ipswich, where London merchants, as well as local merchants, were based and were operating within the wool trade. The parish of St Mary at Quay was home to the towns rich, late fifteenth century merchants and many had their own quays.<sup>590</sup> The cargo of wool on the *Nycholas* was assigned to ten different native Merchants of the Staple under nine separate loads. Staple merchants spread their exports of raw wool over different vessels to lessen the loss if disaster struck and the cargo did not reach its destination. None of the merchants listed as having cargo in the five vessels which travelled on 31 March 1488, can be nominally linked to known north-east Suffolk coastal Suffolk merchants. However, five can be identified as London mercers due to the survival of Italian banking archives where they held accounts and one of these merchants with cargo on the *Nycholas* can be identified as resident at Ipswich in the 1480s.<sup>591</sup> William Nonne of Covehithe, another

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<sup>587</sup> Fleece wool was reckoned by weight. Seven pounds made a nail or clavi and 52 clavi made a sack. The sack was a fiscal unit of 364 clavi to be distinguished from the canvas container in which wool was packed. J. F. Wade, *The Customs Accounts of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1454-1500*, Publications of the Surtees Society 202 (Surtees Society, 1995), 7.

<sup>588</sup> Eileen Power and M. M. Postan, *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century*, London School of Economics and Political Science. Studies in Economic and Social History, V (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1933), 51.

<sup>589</sup> The 'clavi' weights of wool have not been included in the overall calculations due to the small quantity involved.

<sup>590</sup> Amor, *Late Medieval Ipswich*, 10, 87, 186.

<sup>591</sup> London mercers who were Merchants of the Staple are Nicholas Allewyn, Thomas Burgoyne, Henrico Cantelow, Alverdo Rawson, Thomas Wyndowt, see; F. Guidi-Bruscoli, 'London And Its Merchants In

of the ship masters at London in 1488 requested burial at the church of St Mary at Quay, Ipswich in his will proven in 1508.<sup>592</sup> Amor has highlighted 'a sharp increase between 1460 and 1470 in the number of recorded mariners and shipmen resident in the east coast towns and villages of Suffolk' and although he cannot directly link them to any coastal trading connected with the cloth trade, a connection with the associated wool trade is feasible.<sup>593</sup>

It would have been uneconomical for the north-east Suffolk vessels to sail down the coast to London with their holds empty, but explicit details about their cargos on this outward trip do not exist. In order to gain some tangible insight into this issue other customs accounts were interrogated. Of the fifteen masters recorded within the wool customs for the 1488 voyages, three can be further nominally identified within the Tunnage and Poundage accounts for the Port of London for 1487-88.<sup>594</sup> These accounts do not list vessel names or ports of assignment, only the name of the master is given, but William Rede, John Goodylle and John Cornelis all undertook earlier voyages importing or exporting other goods.<sup>595</sup> Both Goodylle and Rede are importing quantities of wine on the 25 Feb 1488, for many of the same merchants. Cornelis, of Easton, imports a selection of goods on the 21 March 1488 which includes almonds, soap, canvas, oil and twelve 'doliis playster de Parys', his cargo is valued for customs at £132, split between four merchants.<sup>596</sup> It is feasible that in early 1488, all three were crossing over the channel from France with wine and plaster of Paris before heading back with cargos of wool. Whilst there is no concrete evidence, it is probable that the

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The Italian Archives, 1380-1530', in *Medieval Merchants And Money, Essays In Honour Of James L. Bolton* (London: University of London School of Advanced Study, 2016), 128-35; Amor, *Late Medieval Ipswich*, 180.

<sup>592</sup> Amor, citing Kowaleski's comments on the importance of coastal trade to the economy of medieval Exeter, notes that there was evidence of commerce with the east coast ports of Dunwich and Yarmouth. Amor, *Late Medieval Ipswich*, 87; Thomas Pounder, a leading Ipswich merchant with links to the Icelandic fish trade and trade with the Low Countries is commemorated with a fine Flemish brass at St Mary Quay church. Linkages between the Ipswich merchants, the Icelandic fish trade, trade with the Low Countries and men from the small east coast ports such as William Nonne have yet to be explored. John Blatchly and Peter Northeast, 'The Pounder Memorial In St Mary At The Quay Church, Ipswich', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* XLI, no. 1 (2005): 57-61.

<sup>593</sup> Amor notes that the seamen of Covehithe, Pakefield, Southwold and Walberswick figure most prominently in these findings which are extracted from the Common Plea rolls. Easton Bawents is not specifically listed. Nicholas R. Amor, *From Wool To Cloth, The Triumph Of The Suffolk Clothier* (Bungay: RefineCatch Limited, 2016), 76-77.

<sup>594</sup> 'The London Customs Accounts', V74, Pt IV, No.1.

<sup>595</sup> In the wool customs and subsidy accounts of 1488, William Rede was master of the Andrew of Dunwich, John Goodylle was master of the Elyn of Southwold and John Cornelis was master of the Nycholas of Easton.

<sup>596</sup> Tunnage and Poundage 29 Sep 1487-Sep 1488, E122/78/7, TNA.

other vessels carried local fresh fish into London and as this did not attract any poundage or tunnage subsidy levy to be paid, no record exists of such undertakings.<sup>597</sup>

As can be seen from the figures in **Table 21**, in 1513 twenty-one vessels made the Calais voyage. 1513 was also the year of the 'ship list' of Norfolk and Suffolk vessels for requisitioning as discussed earlier which therefore allows an opportunity for nominal linkages of the vessels to provide details of their tunnage.<sup>598</sup> All twenty-one vessels can be linked with one of the same name and port or creek designation as on the 'ship list'. Of the twelve vessels which made the voyage to Calais on 11 April 1513, the average tunnage was 38, the smallest was the *John* of Kirkley at 20 and the largest were the four from Southwold at 40 tuns each. The *John* of Easton Bavents, whose master was John a Lee, had a tunnage of 30 and was one of the three vessels, owned by James Sponer, listed in the requisition list of 1513.<sup>599</sup> The total cargo, for the twelve listed vessels on the Calais sailing of 11 April, comprised 580 sacks of wool (the equivalent of c.139,200 sheep) and 33,321 wool-fells. On average, each was carrying the equivalent wool from c.11,600 sheep and 2,777 wool-fells. A comparison with the cargos carried in 1488 illustrates a large increase in the average quantity of shorn wool (+132%) and a large decrease in wool-fells (-57%).

Between 1488 and 1521, at least eight Easton Bavents vessels and their masters joined with others from north-east Suffolk in the Calais wool export trade.<sup>600</sup> These men closely resemble the description given by Kowaleski when discussing entrepreneurial 'shipmasters', especially those who owned their own vessels, in the late medieval period. These were men who skippered the vessel yet had to split their time between navigational roles, mastering the ship, dealing with merchants, arranging for freight and often selling the cargos as well.<sup>601</sup> A closer look at the backgrounds of the eight masters, who in some cases were also owners of vessels, reveals further insights into the cosmopolitan make-up of the Easton maritime community (**Table 22**). Half of these masters can be traced through the EIDB; three of the eight shipmasters, John Cornelyce, Cornelius Lawson and John Rowle were

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<sup>597</sup> See Beginner's Guide, 'The London Customs Accounts', V74, Pt 11, No.9, xx.

<sup>598</sup> Port of Yarmouth: List of vessels, 1512-1513, E122/195/10, TNA.

<sup>599</sup> John a Lee - from Lee/Leigh (on-sea) on the Essex coastline near Southend, on the coastal route to London.

<sup>600</sup> There are large gaps in the extant records between 1461-1477 and 1502-1507.

<sup>601</sup> For a fuller discussion of the role of 'shipmasters' see, M. Kowaleski, *The Shipmaster as Entrepreneur in Medieval England, Commercial Activity, Markets and Entrepreneurs in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Richard Britnell*, Commercial Activity, Markets and Entrepreneurs in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Richard Britnell (Boydell and Brewer Inc., 2011).

first generation immigrants from Brabant and Zeeland with Henry Butte, son of John Butt also from Zeeland, second generation. Of the other eighty-eight identified masters listed at Calais, from the creeks as listed in **Table 21**, only two can be directly located as aliens in Suffolk and both have Easton connections. William Assh on a Southwold vessel in 1450 and Edmund Cok on a Walberswick vessel in 1458 are both listed at Easton Bavents in the alien subsidy of 1440. John Butt, a master on a Southwold vessel in 1496 is in all probability another son of John But of Easton, listed in 1440.

All the immigrants discussed above, from Easton Bavents, assimilated themselves into their community and remained for the long term, either in Easton or as in Robert a Wode's case, moved to Southwold. Cornelyce and Rowle operated as merchants at London as well as shipmasters and Cornelyce and Lawson were also owners of vessels during their careers, with Lawson being one of the richest inhabitants of Easton at the time of the 1524 Lay Subsidy. These figures confirm the high ratio of the immigrant population of Easton Bavents within its maritime economy and of their important standing within it as evidenced in Chapters 4 and 5.

### Newcastle and coal

Trade in coal from Newcastle, brought down the east coast to Suffolk ports and creeks, had been established by 1481 when customs recorded the *George* of Southwold leaving Newcastle with 'xx celdris carbonum and iij celdris gryndstones'.<sup>602</sup> No Easton Bavents vessels or masters were recorded in the transcribed customs records of Newcastle between 1451 and 1500. The chance survival of an early Chamberlains Account for Newcastle for the years 1508-1511 allows a brief snapshot of the Easton Bavents vessels and masters who plied this route, to be constructed, and a further understanding of mercantile activities to be drawn.<sup>603</sup> These Chamberlains Accounts record revenue and expenditure from tolls levied by the town of Newcastle on vessels using the towns quay and ballast store. Within the four years of the accounts, vessels from fourteen Suffolk ports, between Lowestoft and Ipswich, are recorded as regular visitors, with 198 separate shipments recorded (**Table 23** for

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<sup>602</sup> A celdris/chaldras is a quantity of coal, usually 32 bushells. Wade, *The Customs Accounts of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1454-1500*, 131.

<sup>603</sup> In 1640, Newcastle's muniments were destroyed by the Scots with the Chamberlains Account being a rare survivor. Fraser, *The Accounts of the Chamberlains of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1508-1511*, xi.

those listed from Easton).<sup>604</sup> There is no evidence in these accounts that the north-east Suffolk vessels travelled down the coast in convoy, indicating that the masters felt safe from attack when negotiating the coastline. The tunnage of the vessels of Easton employed in the trade was relatively small; *John*, 30; *Jannette*, 30; *Peter*, 30; *Trinitie*, 40 and the *Jamys*, 19.<sup>605</sup>

A closer examination of the maritime career of one of the masters of the collier vessels provides a time line of his economic rise. Richard Smyth, the master of the *Trinitie* in July 1509, was recorded as a mariner and a defendant in two separate debt cases in the CP40 indexes in 1500 and in 1502, cases brought by John and Walter Peirs/Peyrs, both maritime merchants of Easton Bavents.<sup>606</sup> Smyth's financial situation must have improved by 1513, potentially from his Newcastle coal profits, when he was listed as part owner of the *Petyr*, a vessel of 38 tunnes put forward for requisitioning by the crown.<sup>607</sup> His co-partner in 1513, William Sucklyngs, was later a witness to his will, written and proven in 1522, by which time he was resident in Southwold, another witness being William Sponer, the rector of Easton and brother of James Sponer, owner of the *Trinitie* in 1509.<sup>608</sup> By the date of his death Smythe owned three separate tenements, one in Southwold where he dwelt and two in Easton. Amongst his many other bequests are pilgrimages to St James of Compostella, to Walsingham and to Our Lady of Grace at Ipswich. His executors are to sell '30 cadys of full herring and 300 hundred fish' to finance his will. Richard Smyths journey from mariner to merchant, via ship master and owner, and his move into the town of Southwold reflects the journey and economic rise of many of his contemporaries at Easton and evidences the many linkages between the mariners and merchants.

A later account for Newcastle for the year, 1552-1553 records twenty-one Dunwich and Walberswick ships, plus twelve from Southwold, paying customs dues there, proof vessels from north-east Suffolk were still making the journey.<sup>609</sup> In 1550 Robert

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<sup>604</sup> Fraser, xix.

<sup>605</sup> Two Jamys/James were listed of Easton in 1513, one of 60 tuns and one of 19 tuns, with the 19 tun vessel owned by Robert Hanken being the more obvious contender. The listing of 32 CC is potentially an error and should read a smaller amount.

<sup>606</sup> 'CP40 Indices', CP40/951, 1500, f.321; CP40/959, 1502, f.496.

<sup>607</sup> See Table 16.

<sup>608</sup> Will of Rychard Smyth, of Southwold, IC/AA2/8/281, SCC, SA.

<sup>609</sup> J. Smith, *Bronnen Tot de Geschiedenis van Den Handel Met Engeland, Schotland En Ierland*, Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën ; Groote Serie 86, 91 (Leiden: Nijhoff, 1942), 748.

Stary of Easton, bequeathed his son a 'coole' boat (collier) implying that the Easton men were still operating within the coal trade at this date.<sup>610</sup>

Extant customs records for Dunwich for 1569 and 1572, along with the creeks of Southwold and Walberswick, do not record any Easton vessels plying the coastal trade to Newcastle, Southampton or London although other local ports and creeks continued to do so.<sup>611</sup> The 1569 customs accounts record seventeen voyages, undertaken by seven separate vessels between April and September of that year. All vessels are given as 'of Walberswick' and detail fourteen voyages to London carrying mainly butter and bacon for London merchants. Three returned from London with cargoes which included barrels of pitch for a Lowestoft merchant. The accounts for 1572 do not list merchants or cargos carried but record sixty-one voyages for the year. The vessels are mainly listed as of Southwold, Walberswick and Dunwich but Lowestoft and Pakefield vessels are also recorded. The main voyages are coastal, to and from London, also with Boston, Southampton, Rochester, Maidstone, Ipswich and Newcastle ports listed. Three voyages are also recorded for Walberswick and Dunwich vessels returning from Baye in France and Ostende. Port books for Kings Lynn for the years 1567/8, 1575/6, 1580/1 and 1583/4 record vessels arriving from Dunwich, Walberswick and Southwold and other Suffolk ports and creeks, but again no mention of any from Easton.<sup>612</sup> With no mention of Easton vessels, nor any nominal evidence of Easton shipmasters or merchants listed, these post 1565 port and customs accounts provide further evidence that by the late sixteenth century Easton's maritime trading exploits had ceased due to the deterioration of the haven.

## Conclusion

An examination of a selection of the differing maritime enterprises of Easton Bavents, focused on the period c.1400-c.1550, has revealed several pertinent contributory factors which coalesced to underpin the economic boom, witnessed in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. The haven lying between Easton and Covehithe, and its associated facilities, was of sufficient depth and proportions to accommodate a range of differing types and construction of vessels including those of 60 tonnage.

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<sup>610</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>611</sup> For customs duty any Easton vessels would have come under the jurisdiction of Dunwich. The Port of Yarmouth, Dunwich Official: Customer and Controller Coastal, 1569, 1572, E190/472/2 & 7, TNA.

<sup>612</sup> See Table 5.2 plus fn 46. Gary P. Baker, 'Domestic Trade in Late Tudor England, c.1565-85: A Case Study of King's Lynn and Plymouth', in *The Routledge Companion to Marine and Maritime Worlds, 1400-1800* (Routledge, 2020), 103, 119.

Geographically, its position on the East Anglian coastline with its 'ness' physically jutting out into the North Sea basin, ensured its ability to foster close links with the Low Countries. It can also be demonstrated that the mariners from Easton worked closely with those from neighbouring communities on the north-east Suffolk coastline, strengthening their joint ability for trading and fishing ventures both up and down the English coastline and north to Iceland. The most pivotal, previously unrecorded, contributory factor however was the influence of the influx of alien immigrants to Easton and its close neighbours between 1440 and 1524. The majority who settled at Easton were not transitory visitors, these men assimilated into the community and demonstrated the entrepreneurial skill of being simultaneously a shipman, master and merchant, underpinning the economic boom epitomised by John Cornelyce and his trade in wool to London and on to the Calais Staple.

The detailed examination of testamentary records evidenced the importance of fishing for the community of Easton, operated in conjunction with the trading ventures of the mariners. The variety and quantity of fishing nets and gear bequeathed, demonstrated the seasonality and adaptability of those fishing as differing opportunities arose. Examples included local fishing for sprats, following shoals of herring up and down the coast and trips to Scotland for cod or ling. Evidence of women's contribution to the economy through testamentary bequests also emerged. Fathers provided daughters with the means of an income by bequeathing them fishing nets and related gear plus also ensured that valuable equipment was kept in the family and community. For the widows of the wealthier members of the community, vessels, shares in vessels, assumed profits or doles and merchant stock such as salt or wool were bequeathed. The remarriage of the younger widows to other mariners allowed such assets to be taken forward and used within the community. These testamentary practices demonstrate the importance of both consanguineal and affinal ties, however the 'kinship' of the maritime community is also strongly evident. Close working bonds and trust operated between the men engaged on dangerous voyages and these bonds were operational not only between the mariners at Easton but between the neighbouring maritime communities in north-east Suffolk.

At the dawn of the sixteenth century, Easton was still an attractive economic proposition, as can be witnessed by the arrival of merchant James Sponer from Norfolk. Building on the profits amassed by the maritime economic ventures of the Peers/Pyres family, he became a leading player in the supply of requisitioned ships and the expansion of trading and fishing to Iceland for a short period. The economic boom however was not sustainable as the sixteenth century progressed. Dynamic

coastal changes relating to the movement of the Barnard sandbank and the associated accretion of the haven, flooding of the surrounding low-lying land, and erosion of the ness, prompted the leading figures of the maritime community to move to Southwold and elsewhere where opportunities initially appeared more favourable.

Thomas Gardner, in 1750, described Easton Bavents as 'having a considerable trade for the fishery' but no mention was made of any other facet of maritime trade. Colin Richmond's detailed account of the life of John Hopton and his estates, which included Easton, only discusses small-scale fishing from the beach and provided no sense of the importance of the maritime activity being operated there. Coastal trading and voyages to Calais and Iceland have historically been recorded and examined for mariners from Covehithe, Southwold, Dunwich, Walberswick and Kessingland and that the profits of these voyages are visible today in the scale of the churches built during the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, for a period of around 170 years, the community of Easton Bavents experienced the dramatic rise, fortune and then decline of a maritime economy which due to the subsequent, near total erosion of the parish, has left no visible traces within the landscape to remind us.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Ecclesiastical institutions, clergy and laity, c.1300-1600**

#### **Introduction**

Katherine French has observed that the late medieval parish exerted an institutional authority over the community in the form of power, and episcopal expectations were a natural part of parish and community life.<sup>613</sup> This chapter will look at the ecclesiastical institutions at Easton Bavents, namely, the parish church of St Nicholas, the guild of St Mary, and the chapel of St Margaret, from their earliest incarnations up to the dawn of the seventeenth century. In the absence of any surviving parochial sources, such as parish registers, churchwarden or vestry accounts, the focus will be on the testamentary evidence left in the wills of the inhabitants of Easton, supplemented by records from the Diocese of Norwich and drawing on the wider experience of the population of the Dunwich deanery through Judith-Middleton Stewart's in-depth examination of their testamentary bequests. Through the personal 'voices' of the wills and the administrative records of the diocese, the long-lost institutions of the church, guild and chapel will be explored, including where possible, a reconstitution of their fabric and furnishings. Did Easton's experience, as a maritime community with an influx of immigrants from across the North Sea and a small but successful group of merchants, differ from that of its near neighbours? The aim is to gain a fuller understanding of how these vital community and parish institutions exerted influence over the laity, offered joint parish activities and, up until the Reformation, offered the chance to all of easing ones' passage through purgatory. The post Reformation period to c.1600 will also be discussed in relation to the dramatic coastal changes which were occurring and their effect on these ecclesiastical institutions.

#### **The church of St Nicholas to c.1550**

The parish church of Easton Bavents was dedicated to St. Nicholas, the customary patron saint of sea-farers.<sup>614</sup> The first explicit written mention of this dedication

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<sup>613</sup> Katherine L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 20.

<sup>614</sup> Rebecca Pinney, *The Cult of St Edmund in Medieval East Anglia* (The Boydell Press, 2015), 191.

occurred in 1376 in the will of William Mildenhall, rector.<sup>615</sup> A record of institutions to the rectory and church survives from 1321, with a further seven incumbents instituted in the years to 1376 when the first mention was also made of the chapel of St Margaret, which was recorded as annexed to the parish church of Easton: the chapel will be discussed later in this chapter.<sup>616</sup> A full listing of all the institutions recorded for Easton in the Bishop of Norwich registers, along with names of all recorded rectors, vicars and chaplains who can be identified as worshipping in the parish, can be found at Appendix 8.

The church, cemetery and rectory as discussed in Chapter 5 were located at the southern extremity of the north hethe, lying south of the haven and part of the older settlement. A stylised church, with tower but without a spire, is shown on the 1539 coastal chart but no further architectural features are shown.<sup>617</sup> Very little therefore is known of the exact location, architecture or internal appearance of this church, with no known surviving antiquarian drawings, engravings or depictions of its structure. Gardner in 1754 surmised that it was 'built or rather re-built about three hundred years ago...[and]...has been long since swallowed up by the sea'.<sup>618</sup> Bequests of money and goods from the wills of Easton Bavents inhabitants between 1376 and 1541, specifically financing various building projects and repairs to the fabric of the church of St Nicholas, provide evidence of miscellaneous additions and refurbishments as opposed to a complete re-build (**Table 24**).

After the Black Death, for many parishes, poverty and declining revenue resulted in the parish becoming untenable. However the string of surviving perpendicular churches of the Sandlings coastline, running from Kessingland to Aldeburgh, illustrate that contemporary notions of piety and late fourteenth-century maritime commercial wealth enabled these communities to build and re-build their churches, often on a grand scale.<sup>619</sup> At St Nicholas between 1376 and 1446 the wills only record small scale work, with the 'emendation' or repair of an image of St Nicholas (this could have been a wall painting or a statue) and an area of paving to be undertaken in the

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<sup>615</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>616</sup> DNIR, Despencer 1370-1406, DN/Reg 3, bk 6, f.49, NRO.

<sup>617</sup> Chart of the coast of Suffolk and Norfolk from the mouth of the River Orwell to Gorleston, 1539-40, Cotton Aug I i 58, BL.

<sup>618</sup> Gardner, *An Historical Account of Dunwich*, 258-59.

<sup>619</sup> French, *The People of the Parish*, 3; Page, *The Victoria History of the County of Suffolk*, 1907, 2:24-25.

church around where Katrine Wolman desired her body to be buried.<sup>620</sup> The provision for the repair of bells in 1465 and of a new spiral staircase to access the belfry in 1473, strongly indicate the start of a period of refurbishment for St Nicholas rather than the complete building of a new church as was being undertaken at nearby Southwold and Walberswick.<sup>621</sup> The making of the candle beam in 1473, provision for a crucifix in 1474 and the painting of the associated rood-loft in 1486 strengthen this assumption. Three bequests for the painting of an image of St Nicholas, during 1486 and 1487, implies a surge of works whose completion was important to the maritime community which was in contrast to Duffy's findings where he notes that generally there was little sign at this date of parishioners showing strong devotion to their patron saint.<sup>622</sup> Of the main donors, Peter Westwynd, who set aside £2 6s 8d for his painting schemes, was a mariner originally from Brabant.<sup>623</sup> Similarly, widow Margery Butt's husband John was a mariner from Zeeland, and their sons John and Henry were both mariners.<sup>624</sup> Richard Thomson left net bequests in his will and his payment of salt to finance his painting of St Nicholas strongly suggests he was also a fisherman. Between 1444 and 1551 there was also a steady stream of at least a further twenty bequests amounting to nearly £34 to the high altar and in sums for general repairs and building works to the fabric of the church along with the money paid for work which would have been financed during the lifetime of the parishioners which cannot be calculated.

During the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries the making of new images and the gilding, painting and embellishment of old ones, was a prominent part of the manifestation of popular piety and devotion within the community.<sup>625</sup> For most parishes, this manifestation culminated with the painting of varied images of saints on the rood-screen; many for north-east Suffolk have survived. Eamon Duffy describes the rood-screen at neighbouring St Edmund, Southwold as one of 'the best' examples

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<sup>620</sup> As noted by Middleton-Stewart, most Dunwich deanery wills for the period 1370-1440 were not informative regarding church building schemes. Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:21.

<sup>621</sup> Simon Cotton, *Building The Late Mediaeval Suffolk Parish Church* (Suffolk: Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History, 2019), 103-5; Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:18.

<sup>622</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars, Traditional Religion in England c.1400-c.1580*, 2nd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 2005), 162.

<sup>623</sup> Alien subsidy, 1483, E179/180/111, rot, 3, TNA.

<sup>624</sup> Alien subsidy, 1440, E179/180/92, pt 2, m.12, TNA.

<sup>625</sup> As previously noted, this devotion did not usually take the form of the patron saint of the church. Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 156.

of the surviving screens in East Anglia.<sup>626</sup> It is of interest that the three separate screens at Southwold, dividing the chancel from the nave and the north and south chapels from the aisles, have all been reduced in size with the ends of the upper beam in all cases roughly sawn off and the tracery below cut. Audrey Baker, in her in-depth examination of the screens, questions whether they were originally made for Southwold church, as they obviously do not quite fit.<sup>627</sup> Were sections of this screen initially designed for and erected at St Nicholas at Easton in the mid to late fifteenth century, but the painting schemes never fully completed?<sup>628</sup> The north aisle screen at Southwold was reputed to be the gift of John Gueman and his wife Catherine. His merchant mark is shown on shields at the base of the screen and according to Gardner there was also a brass inscription to the east of the pulpit near the north aisle, but this Gueman remains elusive and no record of him has been uncovered.<sup>629</sup> The magnificent new church at Southwold neared completion in the 1490s around the time the wealthy mercantile elite were gradually moving out of Easton to Southwold as it gained corporation status in 1494. It is possible that the screens were taken down and moved to St Edmunds where the painting scheme was completed.

In 1500, John Chylderows, the elder, described in 1490 as a yeoman, set aside an unknown amount of money from the sale of his goods and asked his executors to provide the church with an image of St Barbara. It was to 'stand in the wall' alongside an image of St Margaret which was already there. The language is ambiguous, and it is not clear if 'standing in the wall' suggested a physical statue in a niche rather than a painting upon the wall or possibly a screen image. St Barbara was a saint whose

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<sup>626</sup> Eamon Duffy, *Saints, Sacrilege and Sedition; Religion and Conflict in the Tudor Reformation* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2012), 69; For a full discussion of the execution and iconography of this screen see; Audrey Baker, *English Panel Paintings 1400-1558, A Survey of Figure Paintings on East Anglian Rood Screens*, ed. Ann Ballantyne and Pauline Plummer (London: Archetype Publications Ltd, 2011).

<sup>627</sup> Baker, *English Panel Paintings 1400-1558*, 184. Baker acknowledges that the screen must have been painted in situ at Southwold, but the wooden structure of the screens could have been assembled in another church and transported in single entities. For all three screens their width has been reduced as the upper ends of the beam have all been roughly sawn off and the tracery below cut.

<sup>628</sup> The screens contain examples of fine 'gesso' work which involved plaster of Paris and in 1488 John Cornelis of Easton imported 12 barrels of plaster of Paris on his vessel from France. Tunnage and Poundage 29 Sep 1487-Sep 1488, E122/78/7, TNA.

<sup>629</sup> Baker, *English Panel Paintings 1400-1558*, 30; Gardner, *An Historical Account of Dunwich*, 205; For Gueman's mark see plate XXIII, J. R. Girling, 'Merchants' Marks in Suffolk', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* XXIX, no. 1 (1961): 103-37; Although over one hundred years before the screens production there was a Johanne Gulman listed at Easton in 1327. Hervey, *Suffolk* 1327, II:75.

popularity in England was stimulated by mercantile activity.<sup>630</sup> Her cult on the continent had been well established by the end of the fourteenth century and the use of her name as a Christian name in the Low Countries in the fifteenth century was a good measure of her popularity.<sup>631</sup> Easton's varied links with the Low Countries and Brabant, through its immigrant maritime community, would have surely contributed to Chylderows choice of saint.

Burials within the church building were the prerogative of the most important parishioners and, between 1392 and 1539, at least thirteen testators requested burial within the fabric of St Nicholas rather than in the churchyard, with only one testator leaving the choice to their executors.<sup>632</sup> In 1392, Sir Richard Cossyn, knight and manorial lord, proclaimed his importance by requesting a horse proceed his body into the church and he be laid to rest in the chancel, a position illustrating his high status.<sup>633</sup> Later in the fifteenth century, as at Walberswick and Southwold, Easton had no resident gentry or manorial family requesting burial within the church which, so Middleton-Stewart states, would have discouraged other parishioners asking for the same and therefore those buried within the church were part of the mercantile elite, who also in many instances had financed the refurbishment work.<sup>634</sup> Further glimpses of the building fabric are contained within such requests for burials, with three widows of wealthy mariners all asking to be laid by their husbands who had preceded them into the building, but with no further clues as to where they physically lay.<sup>635</sup> In 1491 John Franke, an immigrant mariner, requested that his body be buried in the church 'afore the stole that I use most to sytte'.<sup>636</sup> Walter Peers requested also that his body lie 'at my wifes stoles end' whilst his brother John wanted his body to lie fully 'within my stole'.<sup>637</sup> For some parishioners there was specific seating which had been paid for and was sat on regularly, whilst others, such as John Peyrs had an enclosed seating area, large enough to accommodate his body beneath the floor. William

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<sup>630</sup> Walberswick had a guild dedicated to St Barbara and with vessels named 'Barbara' was potentially operated as a guild with maritime mercantile connections. Gardner, *An Historical Account of Dunwich*, 145.

<sup>631</sup> Nicholas Rogers, 'Trading Saints: Cults Associated With Mercantile Activity', in *The Medieval Merchant*, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, XXIV (Donnington: Shaun Tyas, 2014), 218–19.

<sup>632</sup> Burial within the church usually cost 6s 8d and although status permitted such, it was up to the individual to choose burial within the building. Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:68.

<sup>633</sup> Will of Rich'd Cossyn, 1392, Appendix 1.

<sup>634</sup> Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:69.

<sup>635</sup> Will of Kathrine Wolleman, 1446; Katrine Nottingham, 1465; Katrine Ganne, 1485, Appendix 1.

<sup>636</sup> Will of John Ffranke, 1491, Appendix 1.

<sup>637</sup> Although the spelling of the names is different background research leads to the belief they were brothers. Wills of John Peyrs, 1505, and Walter Peers, Appendix 1.

Boswell, who had been rector of St Nicholas for twenty years, requested in 1499 that his body be laid on the south side of the choir which implied that at St Nicholas the seating for the choir as well as the clergy was within the chancel.<sup>638</sup>

In 1528, Downy Bekke, also an immigrant, described in detail the cross he wished to be made for the handsome sum of £22, due from the sale of his half ownership of a vessel called the *Marie and John*. In asking for a 'cross with Marie and John' to be made, was Downy indicating that the cross would sit between images of Marie and John, as this would point to it being a rood-cross. As with many of the will bequests, difficulty in deciphering the language can lead to ambiguity but with a bequest for a new font, also in 1528, it is evident that the church was still undergoing some refurbishment and therefore the completion of the rood is a feasible assumption. The final will bequest which specifically named fabric repairs was that written in 1537 by James Sponer, the wealthy merchant who has been discussed in previous chapters. His glazing scheme (**Table 24**) was one of only seven bequests from the Dunwich deanery wills examined in detail by Judith Middleton-Stewart to detail expenditure on glass.<sup>639</sup> She notes that his grand scheme was replacing what had fallen into disrepair and it is disappointing that it is therefore not described in any fuller detail. Sponer was quite clear that the re-glazed windows were to be 'made new' but of the same 'scantling' or geometrical dimensions as they were before, which could indicate they were of perpendicular style. The revelation that by 1537, some of the church windows were now in a state of disrepair may well be linked to the economic decline of the community which had set in from the start of the 1530s.

Testamentary bequests, as well as detailing physical building work, also detailed fabric and furnishings for the church, along with vestments for the clergy and laity. In 1442 Robert Sparhawk, was described as a 'holy water clerk of Easton Bavents' in a debt case brought before the court of Common Pleas.<sup>640</sup> Without this litigation, any reference to his occupation would have gone unrecorded as it was not given in his will, written in 1456.<sup>641</sup> He bequeathed his son a rosary described as a pair of jet beads with a silver ring on them and his tunic and hood, no doubt both used when acting as general assistant to the parish priest. In April 1484, Thomas Hopton, manorial lord of Easton, wrote his will at Swillington in Yorkshire where he was

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<sup>638</sup> Will of William Boswell, 1499, Appendix 1.

<sup>639</sup> Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:236.

<sup>640</sup> 'CP40 Indices', CP40/724/1865, 1442, TNA.

<sup>641</sup> Appendix 1.

resident.<sup>642</sup> He requested that if funds allow, his executors were to spend £2 6s 8d on a new cope for Easton kirk. There were also directions that his and his wife's coats of arms were to decorate it, although due to the complexities of his will it is not clear whose arms were placed on the cope, if indeed it was ever made. He wrote that 'if Isabell Barnebow be with me here my wife at the daye of my deth' before also directing that his mother 'Thomasyn Hopton and Master Tounesend make a sufficient and sure estate unto my wife of Eston for the term of her life'. This surely implies that he was living in Swillington with Isabel rather than being resident in Easton with his wife Margaret, who was made his executrix along with Sir William Hudson, parson of Easton. The will implied that Margaret was contemplating becoming a vowess after his death or Thomas desired that she would, as he also wrote that if 'my wife take the mantell and the ring within a yere after my deth than I wyll that myn executoures all release unto hir'. A widow could save her soul, save her independence and her dynastic properties by taking a vow of perpetual chastity authorised by a bishop.<sup>643</sup> This was known as 'taking the mantel and the ring' and was an avenue realistically only open to women who were from wealthy families. Margaret survived Thomas by at least three years as Margaret (late the wife of Thomas Hopton), the daughter of William Scargill of Whitkirk, a wealthy, long established Yorkshire family, was recorded as holding a court for the manor of Northales three years later in 1489.<sup>644</sup> A vowess was not dissimilar to an anchoress although it did not necessitate such withdrawal from the world.<sup>645</sup> Many of them resided in a dwelling close to a religious house or site of pilgrimage. At Easton, the chapel of St Margaret may have enticed Margaret to follow this path, especially if the problems in her marriage stemmed from problems relating to childbirth.<sup>646</sup> By 1504 when Walter Peers wrote his will, £5 was allowed for a cope of white damask to be made for Easton, twice that allowed by Thomas in 1484.<sup>647</sup> The copes would have been worn on ceremonial occasions and were not the everyday vestments specifically used for Mass. Middleton-Stewart has calculated that the cost of a new cope of damask in 1528 was not less than £6 5s 8d, of which only 6s 8d was for the making up, the rest was the cost of the cloth and

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<sup>642</sup> Will was proven in 1486. Appendix 1.

<sup>643</sup> Michelle M. Sauer, 'The Meaning Of Russet: A Note On Vowesses And Clothing', *Early Middle English* 2, no. 2 (2020): 92.

<sup>644</sup> Richmond has this as the manor of Easton Bavents, but the court is for the manor of Northales. Manor of North Hales court rolls, 1482-1483, 1485-1489, V5/19/2/7, SA. Richmond, *John Hopton*, 140, fn. 150.

<sup>645</sup> Sauer, 'The Meaning Of Russet: A Note On Vowesses And Clothing', 92.

<sup>646</sup> The significance of St Margaret to women and childbirth is discussed later in the Chapter.

<sup>647</sup> Appendix 1.

decoration materials.<sup>648</sup> It is doubtful the amount allowed by Thomas Hopton in 1484 for his cope, with intricate applied needlework, covered the cost of the production of such a garment.

The Peers/Peyrs/Piers/Perse family of Easton, Dunwich and other nearby parishes, at the start of the sixteenth century, were wealthy maritime merchants.<sup>649</sup> Husband and wife, John and Elizabeth Peyrs/Peers of Easton were amongst the first testators in the north-east Suffolk area to have their wills proven at the higher ecclesiastical court of the PCC.<sup>650</sup> This indicates a higher degree of wealth but also indicates closer connections with London, where the court was physically located. John's will, proven in March 1505, a month earlier than his sibling Walter Peers, suggests they died within a short time of each other, possibly as a result of the same maritime mishap.<sup>651</sup> John left money to the high altar of St Peters at Dunwich as well as to the altar of St Nicholas at Easton and from the sale of his goods he instructed that his executors provide 'to Easton church a pair of chalices'. No monetary cost was assigned to the chalices but by 1508, when his widow Elizabeth had her will proven, the chalices had still not been provided as she bequeathed five marks for a 'peyre of chales'.<sup>652</sup> John Peyrs had appointed Sir Edmund Jenney, (Jenney), a lawyer of Knodishall, as his executor and gave him 40s for his efforts. Jenney was a renowned prevaricator when acting as executor and often took many years to complete the administration of wills which could account for the chalices not being delivered.<sup>653</sup> In his will of 1522, some seventeen years after Peyrs death, Jenney noted that he still had £20 remaining in his hands of the Peyrs money. To assuage his guilt, he bequeathed a glass window be made in the south side of Knodishall Church with an 'orate' written into it for John Peyrs soul, from whose goods the window was made. Money left over would also finance a vestment and alb of damask for Knodishall church.<sup>654</sup> Elizabeth Peers did

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<sup>648</sup> Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:206.

<sup>649</sup> Richard Perse, a relative was bailiff for Dunwich in 1342 and Thomas Peers was MP again for Dunwich in 1452-53. The family was still living in Dunwich in the last years of the seventeenth century. Middleton-Stewart, 17:88-89.

<sup>650</sup> For the maritime parishes of Lowestoft, Kirkley, Pakefield, Kessingland, Easton, Southwold, Walberswick, Southwold, Dunwich and Aldeburgh, Richard Cooke of Easton was the first testator to have his will proven at the PCC in 1495. Only one will at Benacre in 1434 and one at Covehithe in 1494 were proven earlier. The National Archives, 'PROB 11' (The National Archives), accessed 23 June 2024, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/advanced-search>.

<sup>651</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>652</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>653</sup> Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:272.

<sup>654</sup> Will of Edmund Jenney, 1522, 108 Brigges, NCC, NRO.

not make the same error in her choice of supervisor. She appointed John Thorne, parson of Easton to oversee her testamentary wishes.

In 1547, Edward VI decreed that inventories of church goods and valuables were to be collected. The reason given was to prevent private embezzlement, but it was also apparent that the crown was concerned about the sale of many of the treasures by parish gilds which sensed that confiscation by the authorities was imminent.<sup>655</sup> In November of that year, the churchwardens of Easton, Robert Stary and John Cok had sold, 'with the consent of the town, a cross, a pair of chalices, a pair of sensors and a pax for the sum of £29 5s and 4d'.<sup>656</sup> Churchwardens were the principal executive officers of the parish and were elected from the ranks of yeomen or leading tradesmen of the parish. They were expected to maintain the church and take care of its possessions but they also had to implement at a local level the policies of central government and other institutions.<sup>657</sup> Stary was a boat owner with interests in coal trading and Iceland ventures and in 1545 was noted as the 'stallworthy' in the collection returns for a benevolence.<sup>658</sup> Stary and Coke stated they had used the money raised for the good of the town by spending £13 on the safeguarding of the marshes, £11 5s 5d for the repair of the quay and 26s 8d to buy shot and to repair the guns. As discussed earlier in Chapter 4, this provides important references to the community making attempts to protect its flooding defences and to repair the common quay at a time of known decline and damaging storm surges. The chalices and cross were no doubt those bequeathed by Elizabeth Piers in 1508 and Downey Bekke in 1528. Five years after the 1547 inventory was made a subsequent inventory of church goods was commissioned to find out the extent of church plate and bells left within the county, Easton Bavents records it was in possession of only one chalice and three great bells.<sup>659</sup>

### **The guild of St Mary**

At his death in 1456, Robert Bryggs had left ten marks, in the hope that a guild would be founded in Easton and a priest ordained. It is unusual to find the foundation date

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<sup>655</sup> Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 476.

<sup>656</sup> E315/510, f.57r, TNA.

<sup>657</sup> David Dymond, *The Business of the Suffolk Parish 1558-1625* (Suffolk: Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History, 2018), 7.

<sup>658</sup> Stary is listed first in the return in the absence of any lessee or farmer of the manor. Benevolence from the laity and clergy, 1545, E 179/181/253, rot. 6d, TNA.

<sup>659</sup> Inventory of Church Goods, 1552-53, E 315/509, f.25r, TNA.

of a guild through testamentary sources and we cannot be certain that the guild was founded immediately after Brygg's death. Seventeen years later when his wife Agnes died, she specifically bequeathed money to the guild, indicating it must have been an entity when she wrote her will.<sup>660</sup> Over the next thirty-five years, nine further separate bequests of money and goods were left to it by Easton testators totalling £8 and a selection of household items (**Table 25**). With no surviving accounts it is impossible to know the financial assets of the guild or to fully understand the composition of its membership.

Guilds were communal chantries dedicated to a particular saint and could perform a variety of functions. These included organizing intercession for the souls of the dead, providing a grammar education for the sons of members, providing an institution to promote harmony and self-regulation within a community and offering an institution where incomers could find support and friendship for commercial and other reasons.<sup>661</sup> Membership of the guild involved the payment of a subscription which generally entitled help when hard times or adversity hit, to be prayed for by other members upon death and being able to join in social activities with others such as dinners, plays and celebrations on the day of the guild's dedication.<sup>662</sup> The bequest of household items, such as the great brass pot and basin left by Katrine Ganne in 1485, would have supported the ceremonial aspects of the guild and have been useful at the time of feasting. Services were held within St Nicholas church at Easton for the guild which was dedicated to St Mary and known variously as the guild of Our Lady and Blessed Mary. The first instance of this dedication was not recorded until 1479, in the will of William Smyth. Peter Northeast has estimated that there were approximately 500 such parish guilds in Suffolk in the period up to their dissolution in 1547 and within these the dedication to St Mary was the most popular choice with nearly 16%.<sup>663</sup>

The establishment of the guild in or soon after the mid-1450s coincides with the purchase of the manor by John Hopton and the expansion of his estate at Blythburgh

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<sup>660</sup> Farnhill states that wills are not a good source for identifying origins of a guild or the date of its dissolution. At Easton many of the guild references are found within wills. Ken Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia, c.1470-1550* (York: York Medieval Press, 2001), 28.

<sup>661</sup> Farnhill, 1.

<sup>662</sup> Peter Northeast, 'Parish Gilds', in *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk* (Woodbridge: SCC & SIAH, 1999), 58.

<sup>663</sup> Northeast, 58; Farnhill, *Guilds in East Anglia*, 38.

and Yoxford.<sup>664</sup> Was the foundation connected to the influence of Hopton, the local magnate, or rooted in the influx of alien immigrants from Brabant and the Low Countries which also occurred in this time period, with the associated rise in maritime adventures? This is a question which cannot be answered by the sparse references within the will bequests, but the amount left by Bryggs of ten marks or £6 13s 4d was a reasonably significant sum which would have facilitated the hiring of a guild priest, provided an initial fund to payout to members if required and sustained initial feasting on celebratory dates. In the later medieval period, areas of economic activity have been identified as supporting large numbers of guilds and most late medieval ports supported them and they allowed immigrants to create social and economic bonds within their new communities.<sup>665</sup> As well as providing a medium where disputes and conflicts could be resolved between members, the guilds also used bequests to purchase land whose profits provided loans to members to further economic ventures. Harry Brankaster had annotated his will in 1508, on the eve of his venture to Iceland, that 'I owe the towne 13s and 4d and our ladys guild 16s and 8d – I have payed [the guild] 10s 11d'.<sup>666</sup> It is feasible that the guild of St Mary at Easton provided such fiscal benefits to the influx of immigrants as well as the other inhabitants in the latter fifteenth and early sixteenth century.

The last bequest to the guild was recorded in 1510 indicating it was no longer attractive to testators and probably signifying its decline, although general decline in guild activity nationwide prior to the Reformation was not consistent.<sup>667</sup> In 1513 Robert Rudnall, a mariner with family links to the mercantile Piers family, left 6s 9d to the guild of Our Lady of Boston.<sup>668</sup> This guild, with a chapel in the church of St Botolph, was the oldest and wealthiest in Boston. Its popularity amongst the merchants and mariners of Boston was enhanced by the spiritual benefits it could bestow.<sup>669</sup> For an initial outlay of £2000, the Pope had granted the guild an altar of Scala Coeli and various indulgences allowing members remission from purgatory and by 1520 had become the premier collecting institution for such indulgences with membership

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<sup>664</sup> Hopton had links with guilds at Laxfield, Peasenhall and Kelsale as payments were recorded within the manorial accounts to all three. Later, Owen Hopton, was a stockholder of his guild c.1530 (which one is unknown). Richmond, *John Hopton*, 73–74, 177; Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:149.

<sup>665</sup> Farnhill, *Guilds in East Anglia*, 33.

<sup>666</sup> Previously discussed in Chapter 6. Appendix 1.

<sup>667</sup> A decline in guild activity was detected in Suffolk by 1520 but in London guild activity increased between 1522 and 1538. Farnhill, *Guilds in East Anglia*, 154–55.

<sup>668</sup> Will of Robert Rudnall, 1513, Appendix 1.

<sup>669</sup> Sally Badham, 'The Religious Guilds Associated With St Botolph's Church, Boston', in 'The Beste and Fayrest of al Lincolnshire': *The Church of St Botolph, Boston, Lincolnshire, and Its Medieval Monuments*, BAR British Series 554 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2012), 60.

costing 6s 8d.<sup>670</sup> Mariners from Easton who plied their trade along the coast would have been familiar with Boston and its guilds and the port had also been a source of stone for the building of Walberswick church in the latter 1400s and John Godyll, maritime merchant of Southwold had requested burial at the Austin friary there in 1496.<sup>671</sup>

There is no evidence of the guild of St Mary at Easton, neither in 1524 within the subsidy returns nor in the chantry certificates of 1546, ascertaining other such institutions wealth prior to their disbanding.<sup>672</sup> However evidence of the guild's assets has survived. During Elizabeth's reign records of the vast assets of the guilds and chantries which were sold off were recorded in the Patent Rolls. In February 1566, three acres of land at Easton Bavents were sold, along with many other un-associated assets, to William Gryce, the Queen's servant, and Charles Newcommen for the total sum of £251 14s 6d. The land at Easton was described as 'our ladys rode' and had lately been in the hands of Arthur Deves.<sup>673</sup> Land called 'ladies land' (as an abuttal) was recorded at Easton in 1583 within the rental of the dissolved land holdings of Blythburgh Priory. Arthur Deves was also listed as a 'late' landholder in this document.<sup>674</sup> Four years later in February 1570 an extensive grant of former guild and chantry lands was given to Hugh Counsell and Robert Pistor, of Calais, Middlesex and London, in recognition of their services to Henry VIII, Edward VI and Elizabeth.<sup>675</sup> Within this large grant was a house called 'the Gulyd Hall' at Easton Bavents with appurtenances, which 'had not lately been occupied by the guild there'.<sup>676</sup> St Marys guild at Easton during its time of operation had been able to provide a separate building for members use and had assets of at least three acres of land to generate further income.

Easton only had one guild recorded during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries whereas at Lowestoft there were at least five altars within St Margarets church

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<sup>670</sup> The amount left by Rudnall would have financed such an indulgence. Badham, 62.

<sup>671</sup> Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:108; Will of John Godyll, 1496, Multon 35, NRO.

<sup>672</sup> Evidence of c.80 guilds survive within Suffolk, through the value of their goods, within the 1524 taxation subsidy, although the treatment of the institutions was not consistent amongst the collectors for the various hundreds. Hervey, *Suffolk 1524*, xxii; Vincent B. Redstone, *Chapels, Chantries and Gilds in Suffolk* (Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History, 1904), 30–71.

<sup>673</sup> Patent Roll, 8 Eliz. I, Pt 7, 1566, C66/1025, m.18, TNA.

<sup>674</sup> Add Ms 48382, 1582-83, BL. Arthur Deves is listed in the 1568 lay subsidy returns for Easton assessed on £2 of lands. Hervey, *Suffolk 1568*, 61.

<sup>675</sup> 'Counsell, Hugh, of Calais', History of Parliament Online, accessed 25 July 2024, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/counsell-hugh-1519-72-or-later>.

<sup>676</sup> Patent Roll, 12 Eliz. I, Pt 3, 1570, C66/1063, m.4, TNA.

identified as connected with religious fraternities or guilds during the late fifteenth century.<sup>677</sup> At Southwold, Reydon, Walberswick and Dunwich two or more guilds were also recorded at each and it has been noted that parishes with more than one guild experienced rivalries and competition between the institutions for members and finance and that guilds represented different, specific peer groups or craft groupings.<sup>678</sup> With immigrants from Brabant and members of the wealthy Piers/Peers family leaving bequests to the guild and financing priests, it is reasonable to suggest that Easton's solitary guild signified a unified maritime community working towards a cohesive economic goal from the mid fifteenth to the early sixteenth century.

### **The chapel of St Margaret and pilgrimages, to c.1518**

The earliest reference to the chapel of St Margaret at Easton Bavents dates from 1376 when Roger Bryghtelm of Acle was instituted to 'the parochial church of Easton Bavents with chapel of St Margaret annexed to the same' (Appendix 8).<sup>679</sup> A *capella* or chapel generally describes an ecclesiastical building smaller than the parish church but with its own identity which could be part of the church separated by a wall or a screen or a free-standing entity and for Easton's chapel of St Margaret, its exact form and location at this early date was unknown.<sup>680</sup> There were also chapels at neighbouring coastal Southwold and Walberswick, although they were annexed to the parishes of Reydon and Blythburgh and eventually both of these chapels became the site of the parish church.<sup>681</sup> At these coastal locations, these chapels were founded as 'chapels of ease' to serve the growing maritime and fishing populations in the area and the dating of the foundation of the chapel at Easton between 1361-1376 coincides with the development of the haven lying between Easton and Covehithe.<sup>682</sup> Two chaplains were noted in 1415 and in 1418, as of Easton, who in all probability were affiliated to the chapel rather than the parish church.<sup>683</sup> In 1426-1427 the

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<sup>677</sup> Butcher, *Medieval Lowestoft*, 209.

<sup>678</sup> Dymond and Martin, *Historical Atlas Suffolk*, 58; Butcher, *Medieval Lowestoft*, 210; Farnhill, *Guilds in East Anglia*, 19.

<sup>679</sup> It is possible that Roger Brygtelm came from the Augustinian priory at Acle called Weybridge. Hubert de Bavent was a witness to grants made to Weybridge priory 1272-1307. Francis Blomefield, *An Essay Towards A Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, vol. 11 (London: W. Miller, 1810), 92.

<sup>680</sup> N. Orme, 'Church and Chapel in Medieval England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6 (1996): 76, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3679230>.

<sup>681</sup> There were also similar chapels at Sizewell and Thorpe, 12-13 miles to the south, on the coast which were annexed from Snape and Leiston priories.

<sup>682</sup> Fox, *Evolution of the Fishing Village*, 1:22-23.

<sup>683</sup> See Appendix 8.

community of Easton petitioned the abbot of Sibton to be allowed to build a free standing chapel, endow it with a priest and to have it blessed and consecrated without requiring the licence of the rector.<sup>684</sup> The mandate was based on the problems the community were having accessing their parish church. It was said to be a quarter of a mile from their community and that in the winter, the aged, pregnant women and the feeble could not get to it on account of floods and bad roads. It is probable that the land on which the chapel was built was held by Sibton abbey in the form of half a knight's fee, hence the petitioning of the abbot.<sup>685</sup> The manorial survey of c.1431-1531 places the chapel in the north of the manor, near the haven with the sea lying to the east.<sup>686</sup> The founding of this chapel is therefore closely linked to the growth of a maritime settlement in the northern part of the parish, close to the haven, and some distance from the parish church and original settlement of Easton.

The dedication of the chapel to St Margaret of Antioch is of interest, especially when viewed in relation to the cult of St Margaret which flourished in late medieval East Anglia.<sup>687</sup> Margaret's martyrdom in the late third century, after her confrontation with the devil in the form of a dragon, where she burst out of its stomach, resulted in her association with virginity, sexuality and childbirth. Versions of her life circulated in hundreds of manuscripts, and she enjoyed a large number of church dedications; over 200 in England, with a quarter in east Norfolk and north-east Suffolk, and in fifteenth century East Anglia three lives of St Margaret were produced and commissioned by local patrons.<sup>688</sup> It is the association with the author of one these, Osbern Bokenham, an Augustinian monk of Clare Priory (c.1392-c.1467) and the subsequent flowering of the chapel of St Margaret at Easton as a place of pilgrimage, which will be discussed here.<sup>689</sup>

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<sup>684</sup> 'Lateran Regesta 269: 1426-1427, British History Online', accessed 15 February 2021, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-papal-registers/brit-ie/vol7/pp502-507>.

<sup>685</sup> The Cistercian Abbey was exempt from the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Norwich; hence the mandate being held with the Papal Archives. Philippa Brown, ed., *Sibton Abbey Cartularies*, vol. 2, Suffolk Charters, VIII (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 1986), 17.

<sup>686</sup> See discussion in Chapter 5.

<sup>687</sup> Juliana Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon: The Cult of St Margaret of Antioch in Medieval England*, Illustrated edition (Oxford: OUP/British Academy, 2016), 110; Frances M. Cook, 'Encountering St Margaret of Antioch in Parochial and Personal Contexts in Late Medieval England: Devotional Artefacts, Memorialization and the Construction of Familial and Communal Identity.' (PhD, University of Reading, 2021), 26.

<sup>688</sup> Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon*, 2, 3, 110.

<sup>689</sup> Elizabeth de Burgh's grandfather Richard founded Clare Priory in 1248 and in 1259 he held the manor of Southwold. Elizabeth de Burgh founded Clare Hall at Cambridge. Jennifer Ward, ed., *Elizabeth de Burgh, Lady of Clare, 1295-1360*, Suffolk Records Society, LVII (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), 243; Bottomley, *A Short History*, 3.

In his work ‘Lives of Holy Women’, which begins with a translation of the life of St Margaret, Bokenham informs the reader that a relic of the saint, in the form of her foot (minus the heel and big toe which belonged to the nuns at Reading) was held at an Augustinian priory near his birthplace in East Anglia. Traditionally this has been placed at Buckenham in Norfolk where there was an Augustinian priory (although not dedicated to St Margaret) and with no further evidential links presented.<sup>690</sup> Richard Green, in his work on Bokenham, suggests his birth was at or near Easton Bavents due to the chapel dedicated to St Margaret and the existence of the Augustinian priory at Blythburgh, in the near neighbourhood.<sup>691</sup> Further nominal and kinship links, allied with testamentary evidence, strengthen Green’s suggestion.<sup>692</sup> Firstly, re-visiting Bokenham’s work on the Lives of Holy Women’, when he describes childhood he uses the images of ‘a child running naked on the beach throwing pebbles into the sea’, which, if he was using his own childhood as reference, infers he was born in a coastal location.<sup>693</sup> Secondly, Margaret de Naunton, granddaughter of John Argentein of Halesworth (manorial Lord or administrator for Easton in the 1360s and 1370s), married a Robert de Bokenham, son of the Argentein manorial serjeant.<sup>694</sup> It is possible, but unprovable at this time, that Osbern Bokenham was a son of this union and had been born at or near to Easton Bavents.<sup>695</sup> This supposition is further strengthened by Margery Argentein, widow of William Argentein, uncle of Joan, who bequeathed Master Osbern (Bokenham) of Clare the sum of 40s in her will of 1427.<sup>696</sup> Thirdly, John Baret of Bury St Edmunds, a wealthy merchant, knew both Ela Shadelow and John Hopton, owners of the manor of Easton during the period of

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<sup>690</sup> Examples include, Carole Hill, *Women And Religion In Late Medieval Norwich*, Royal Historical Studies in History New Series (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer Limited, 2010); Simon Horobin, ed., *Osbern Bokenham: Lives of the Saints: 356*, Bilingual edition (Oxford: OUP, 2020).

<sup>691</sup> Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* ., Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 342 fn.4.

<sup>692</sup> The association of the Clare family and Elizabeth de Burgh, with the manor of Southwold see fn. 689, also strengthens the association of Osbern Bokenham with Easton and Southwold.

<sup>693</sup> Sheila Delany, ‘The Body Politic’, in *Impolitic Bodies: Poetry, Saints, and Society in Fifteenth-Century England: The Work of Osbern Bokenham*, ed. Sheila Delany (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 127–59.

<sup>694</sup> David Wollweber, *The de Argentein Family, Cup-Bearers to Medieval Kings* (Halesworth: Halesworth and District Museum, 2018), 39.

<sup>695</sup> The Argentein family had several links with Augustinian priories at Wymondly and Elstowe Bedfordshire, which would warrant further research. Joan Argentein had married Bartholomew de Naunton of Rendlesham. The de Bavent family also held manors in Rendlesham at this date and were linked with the Naunton family.

<sup>696</sup> F. A. Page-Turner, *The Bedfordshire Wills and Administrations Proved at Lambeth Palace and in the Archdeaconry of Huntingdon*, The Publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society: 2 (Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 1914), 44.

Bokenhams life.<sup>697</sup> Baret also left a sum of money to Master Osberne, brother, of Clare, in his will written in 1457.<sup>698</sup> John Baret's grandfather had originated from Cratfield and members of the family had worked for Hopton at Blythburgh and at Easton Bavents and it is reasonable to assume that he knew of Bokenham through these connections. Finally, in 1476, another Easton Bavents and Bokenham connection was recorded within the will of Ralph Bokenham, gentleman and chaplain, who was born in Garboldisham, Norfolk but asked to be buried in the church at Great Livermere at death. Amongst his bequests he left a selection of ecclesiastical works to Easton Bavents including his 'processional and the anthems', although it is not clear if he left the works to the chapel of St Margaret or to the parish church of St Nicholas.<sup>699</sup>

A separate chapel, dedicated to St Margaret, was built at Easton Bavents in the 1420s-1430s, although there had been an earlier chapel dedicated to her from c.1376. For the women of maritime Easton Bavents, with their menfolk often absent for long periods, St Margaret offered help at the time of conception and childbirth.<sup>700</sup> For the mariners themselves, St Margaret's association as 'the pearl of the sea' and for the farmers and merchants, her association with sheep breeding and the wool trade would have made her a popular choice.<sup>701</sup> It is not known if the chapel held any relic of the saint itself, although many were recorded within the country, having first been recorded in the eleventh century, and it is suggested here that the Priory at Blythburgh held the relic of her foot as described by Osbern Bokenham in 1443.<sup>702</sup> By the late fifteenth century the chapel had become the focus of devotional pilgrimages, although the extent of these is difficult to assess.<sup>703</sup> Bokenham had undertaken a pilgrimage to St James at Santiago de Compostela in 1445 and it is feasible that with his links to north-east Suffolk he departed on this journey from

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<sup>697</sup> Margaret Statham, 'John Baret of Bury', *The Ricardian* 13 (2003): 421–22.

<sup>698</sup> Will of John Baret, 1457, IC500/2/2, ff.95v-105v, SA.

<sup>699</sup> Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:169; Suckling notes that the will reads 'Eston Bavent upon the see syde', this is repeated by Middleton-Stewart. The probate copy of the will at NRO is unclear but appears to read 'see vide'. If it was 'upon the see syde' then this would point to it being the chapel of St Margaret which was closer to the sea than St Nicholas. Suckling, *History and Antiquities of Suffolk*, 2:310.

<sup>700</sup> Male absences over long periods created a low sex ratio leading to low birth rates. Kowaleski, 'Demography of Maritime Communities', 88; Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon*, 143.

<sup>701</sup> Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon*, 140–44.

<sup>702</sup> David Butcher records a lock of St Margaret's hair being left as a devotional possession at Lowestoft in 1508. Mary Clayton and Hugh Magennis, *The Old English Lives of St. Margaret*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 81; Butcher, *Medieval Lowestoft*, 212.

<sup>703</sup> Gardner, *An Historical Account of Dunwich*, 259.

Southwold, with a visit to the chapel of St Margaret at Easton first, thereby sealing the chapel with a certain sanctity. With Osbern's death post 1467, and the familial association of Easton Bavents, the chapel had taken on a wider devotional role. For those living in the near vicinity of the chapel such visits could be undertaken readily and not specifically planned for at death. Where late medieval pilgrims' journeys have been recorded the majority occurred within a fifty-mile radius of their parish and therefore the chapel at Easton Bavents would not have been on the pilgrim's national itinerary.<sup>704</sup> Four local testators did leave bequests for pilgrimages to the chapel; in 1471 when it was described as 'our blessed Margaret of the sea', in 1491, 1493 and 1509.<sup>705</sup>

By the early sixteenth century pilgrimages were under attack by reformers who believed that they eased the conscience of a sinner without improving the moral quality of their life.<sup>706</sup> It is not known if any pilgrimages were undertaken further afield or overseas by those living at Easton or in the neighbourhood during their lifetimes but testamentary wishes for a vicarious pilgrim to undertake the overseas pilgrimage at death were left. Vessels were licensed in 1451, 1473 and 1484 to carry up to thirty pilgrims each to Spain from Southwold for those who wished to visit the shrine of St James at Santiago de Compostela, as Bokenham had undertaken in 1445, and licences from other East Anglian ports were also issued at other dates.<sup>707</sup> It is noted however that 'few' vicarious pilgrimages were requested by the deanery testators investigated by Middleton-Stewart and likewise in the wills of maritime Hull during the later middle ages when only two such pilgrimages were requested.<sup>708</sup> It was a preserve of an elite few, and for those physically making the journey it was often an arduous undertaking involving seasickness and cramped conditions for those unused to sea travel. At Easton in 1505, maritime merchant John Peyrs bequeathed that 'a priest and a pilgrim go to Rome, as hastily as can be done after my decease, the priest to abide for a year'. No specific detail of finance was given but earlier in 1474 for a round trip to Rome, 20 marks had been allowed.<sup>709</sup> In 1510, John Cornelyce

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<sup>704</sup> Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:130, fns. 80 and 81.

<sup>705</sup> Will of William Dallyng of Laxfield, 1471, IC/AA2/2/250, SAC, SA; Will of William Wellys, 1491, 79 Wollman, NCC, NRO; will of John More of Gislingham, 1493, R2/11/442, SudAC, SA; will of Margaret Pynne of Walberswick, 1509, IC/AA1/2/5/27, SAC, SA.

<sup>706</sup> Kathleen Kamerick, *Popular Piety And Art In The Late Middle Ages, Image Worship And Idolatry In England 1350-1500*, The New Middle Ages (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 127.

<sup>707</sup> Richard Skilman and John Waynfleet in the *Mary*, 1451; Robert Norfolk in 1473 and vessels called the *James*, *Edmund* and *Trinity* in 1484. Constance Mary Stores, *Jacobean Pilgrims From England To St James Of Compestela* (London: Confraternity of St James, 2021), Appendix II.

<sup>708</sup> Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:128; Heath, 'Urban Piety', 224.

<sup>709</sup> Appendix 1; Will of John Bland of Theberton, 1474, Hubert 65, NCC, NRO.

asked for his pilgrim to go to St James at Santiago de Compostela for 'his soul' and to visit the shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham, and that his ship be sold to finance the journeys. Merchant William Godell of Southwold, who like Cornelyce was involved in the Icelandic voyages, wrote his will in 1509 and he too bequeathed that 'a priest go to Rome to sing for me for the space of a year at five places in Rome'.<sup>710</sup> Godell left the sum of £14 for this undertaking which involved the priest singing at St Peter's, Scala Celi, St Sebastian's, St Johns Lateran's and at St Gregory's.

The last recorded reference to the chapel was in 1518 when Richard March of Southwold left a bequest of 3s 4d for the painting of the Good Rood of Easton chapel.<sup>711</sup> The rood is assumed to have been related to St Margaret's chapel, however it could possibly also have related to a chapel within St Nicholas, perhaps a Good Rood for the guild chapel.

### **Clergy and laity, 1300-1499**

The first named rector of Easton was Henry Bavent. He was a relative, probably younger son, of the manorial lord, Thomas de Bavent, and in 1302 Henry placed his seal upon a bond for the payment of five marks to Henry de Henham Prior of the church of Blessed Peter at Wangford.<sup>712</sup> A few years earlier in spring 1299, a Thomas Bavent, possibly Henry's older brother, had been declared excommunicate as a Carmelite friar by Matthew of Aquasparta, Bishop of Porto, a papal penitentiary, and was imprisoned at Norwich. Later in the year he was absolved of apostasy having been made a Carmelite chaplain.<sup>713</sup> It is feasible that Thomas was given the Easton Bavents manorial holdings by the de Bavent family of Chediston, upon his release from imprisonment at Norwich.<sup>714</sup>

As discussed in Chapter 3, the church at Easton was first recorded as a gift from Roger Bigod and his son William to the Priory of Thetford between 1135 and 1141.<sup>715</sup> By 1291, part of this gift was held by the priory of Wangford, another alien priory of

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<sup>710</sup> Will of William Godell, 1509, PROB 11/16/440, PCC, TNA.

<sup>711</sup> Will of Richard March, 1518, IC/AA2/8/34, SAC, SA.

<sup>712</sup> His seal remains affixed to the document. Bond, 1302, HB26/412/723, SA.

<sup>713</sup> Christopher Harper-Bill, *English Episcopal Acta: 41, Norwich, 1289-1299*, English Episcopal Acta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 217-18.

<sup>714</sup> There were Carmelite friaries at Norwich and Great Yarmouth. Roy Midmer, *English Mediaeval Monasteries (1066-1540), A Summary* (London: Book Club Associates, 1979), 244, 340.

<sup>715</sup> An Alien priory of Cluniac monks founded in 1103 by Roger Bigod and dedicated to St Mary. Midmer, 303; Harper-Bill and British Academy, *Acta VI*, 43-44.

Cluniac monks who were a dependency of Thetford, who held the rights to a portion (13s 4d) of the ecclesiastical value of Easton (£12).<sup>716</sup> In 1499 the value of this pension remained practically the same, valued at 13s 8d, and Wangford priory continued to hold this right until the sixteenth century when it was recorded as such at the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535.<sup>717</sup>

As noted earlier the first recorded institution at Easton dates from 1321 when Reginald de Ingelose of Loddon was made rector under the patronage of Thomas Bavent, manorial lord, and in total twenty-three institutions are recorded to 1666.<sup>718</sup> For the purposes of this study, in examining the clerical and laity life within the community at Easton during its zenith and early decline, closer analysis of only a selection of the incumbencies of the period 1438-c.1590 will be undertaken. The focus will be on the incumbents' relationships to the cultural and economic leading players in the community and at the other end of the spectrum, to the poor. It is hoped that further insight will be gained into the strength of their influence within the maritime community and on any contribution made towards the economic wealth generated within it.

In his writings on the life of John Hopton, Colin Richmond discusses the existence in the 1460s of 'a group of clever men, who enjoyed each other's company, in this small corner of Suffolk'.<sup>719</sup> This group included Thomas Crowe, rector of Easton, the rector of Covehithe, William Yermouth, a Cambridge Master of Arts, and Master Robert Scoles, Professor of Theology and vicar of Reydon with Southwold.<sup>720</sup> Crowe was instituted rector in 1438 under the initial patronage of Robert Shardelow, however it was John Hopton with whom he would have had regular contact until Hopton's death in 1478. For those forty years, Crowe, who died c.1479, was resident in the parish and would have been known to all the community. He was upheld as a learned and trusted man as is evidenced by being appointed supervisor in 50% of the total number of wills proven of Easton between 1444 and 1472. He was also recorded as celebrating a 'certitude', a chant for the souls of Hopton's departed parents and friends and benefactors from 1464-1478, for which service he was paid 4s 4d per

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<sup>716</sup> Rev. William Hudson, *The 'Norwich Taxation' of 1254, so Far as Relates to the Diocese of Norwich, Collated with the Taxation of Pope Nicholas in 1291* (Norwich: Norfolk Archaeological Society, 1908), 101.

<sup>717</sup> Inspection and confirmation, HB26/412/727, SA; Richard C. Taylor, *Index Monasticus* (London: Printed for the author by R. and A. Taylor, 1821), 91.

<sup>718</sup> See Appendix 8.

<sup>719</sup> Richmond, *John Hopton*, 134–35.

<sup>720</sup> 'ACAD, A Cambridge Alumni Database', University of Cambridge, accessed 25 July 2024, <https://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/>.

year.<sup>721</sup> It is known Crowe was also executor for the clergy of other parishes, including the vicar of Reydon with Southwold Robert Salaman in 1444, Richard Folcard, rector of Pakefield, 1451 and Master Robert Scoles in 1470.<sup>722</sup> This network of cultural Cambridge and Oxford educated clergy, described by Richmond above, spread wider than Easton and Southwold and was present in the second half of the fifteenth century within the coastal parishes stretching from Pakefield to Dunwich. The clergymen's links with maritime organisations, their knowledge of navigation and possession of associated books and strong associations with merchants is suggestive of an elite group with power to ensure the maritime merchants on this stretch of coastline were able to ply their trade successfully.

Folcard's brass survives within Pakefield church today, his dress is that of a Master of Arts of Oxford Hall and he was listed as Principal of Haberdash Hall, Oxford c.1438. Folcard, described as a Bachelor of Law, sat as a commissioner in the Court of Admiralty at Ipswich 1445-6.<sup>723</sup> He wrote his will in November 1451 and in it, alongside various bequests of books, he listed ten clerical vestments which were described by colour and rated from 'his best' to his 'worst surplice'.<sup>724</sup> These were left to ten separate clergy, including one each for Master Scoles of Reydon (his best), Sir Thomas Crowe of Easton (his second best), Nicholas Henlee of Carlton Colville, the Prior of Blythburgh and two further rectors of Pakefield. John Spyrling of Kessingland was appointed supervisor and Sir Thomas Crowe an executor. Later, as joint executor of Robert Scoles's will in 1470, Thomas Crowe, alongside Master Yermouth and the parish priest of Southwold, Sir William Hulverdale, had a wider range of bequests to honour.<sup>725</sup> Scoles's armoury collection had to be sold, and his large collection of books divided up. Part was to remain in the parish to provide both ecclesiastical works and 'manuals' for other clergy and townsfolk and other ecclesiastical works had to be taken to Clare Hall in Cambridge along with his astronomy books and his astrolabe.<sup>726</sup> The reference to an astrolabe, a device used to calculate the altitude of objects above the horizon and used for navigational purposes, indicates his interest in this

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<sup>721</sup> Richmond, *John Hopton*, 84, 156.

<sup>722</sup> Will of Robert Salaman, 1444, 20 Wylbey, NCC, NRO.

<sup>723</sup> 'Richard Folcard, Portfolio of Brasses', Monumental Brass Society, accessed 25 July 2024, <http://www.mbs-brasses.co.uk/>.

<sup>724</sup> Will of Richard Folkard, 1451, 93 Aleyn, NCC, NRO.

<sup>725</sup> The career and will of Robert Scolys are discussed more fully in, David Sherlock, 'The Will Of Robert Scolys, Vicar Of Southwold 1444-70', in *Shaping The Past, Theme, Time And Place In Local History Essays In Honour Of David Dymond*, vol. 18, Studies in Regional and Local History (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2020), 61–70.

<sup>726</sup> Clare Hall had been founded by Elizabeth de Burgh in 1346. Ward, *Elizabeth de Burgh, Lady of Clare, 1295-1360*, xxvii.

burgeoning science.<sup>727</sup> Mariners, facing the challenge of understanding complicated concepts and finding the need for an education, turned to educated men on shore who could help provide such learning.<sup>728</sup> In 2017, a rare fifteenth century navicular sundial, used for navigational purposes, was excavated at Sibton abbey providing further evidence of linkages in north-east Suffolk, between learned monks, clergy and mariners.<sup>729</sup> William Yermouth, rector of Covehithe, was the man who had provided the sons and step son of John Hopton with their education before they were sent to Cambridge and London. For this schooling at Covehithe he was paid various amounts from the revenues of the Easton Bavents manor for tuition and board during the 1460s and up to 1471.<sup>730</sup> John Bale, the churchman, historian and later Protestant bishop of Ossory was probably one of the later pupils of the group of educated clergy. Bale was born at Cove in 1495, and his intelligence was recognised or nurtured, as at the age of twelve he joined the Carmelite friars at Norwich, later going on to Cambridge to gain his Bachelor of Divinity.<sup>731</sup>

Crowe's high standing within the mercantile community at Easton can be witnessed not only in his role as their supervisor, but also in 1505 when maritime merchant John Peyrs wrote his will, he specifically left 10s to Sir Thomas Crow the late parson of Easton Bavents for tithes forgotten, although Crowe had been dead for over twenty-five years by this date. This bequest was surely an amount for fabric repairs or renewals to the church in the name of Thomas Crowe who was still held in esteem by Peyrs and who desired his name to be venerated in the church in some way. A further strong connection between the maritime merchant Peyrs and a rector of Easton is evidenced in the will of William Bosewell, listed in 1472 as a pensioner of Corpus Christi College, who died in 1499 and described himself in 1498 as 'lately the rector of Easton Bavent'.<sup>732</sup> Bosewell bequeathed £20 to finance repairs of St Nicholas and told his executors, Robert Boswell of Dunwich and Sir John Wyllkyns, chaplain of Westleton, that this amount was 'in the custody of John Pers of Easton'.

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<sup>727</sup> Merton College, Oxford had an impressive range of astrolabes, globes and planispheres as was fitting for a college with an innovative scientific reputation at this date. Alan Coban, *English University Life In The Middle Ages* (London: UCL Press Ltd, 1999), 158.

<sup>728</sup> Claire Jowitt, Craig L. Lambert, and Steve Mentz, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Marine and Maritime Worlds, 1400-1800* (London and New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), 275.

<sup>729</sup> John Davis, 'The Navicula; Made in Medieval East Anglia?', *British Sundial Society Bulletin* 29, no. ii (2017): 15–23; Gillian Hutchinson, *Medieval Ships and Shipping* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), 179.

<sup>730</sup> Richmond, *John Hopton*, 134–35.

<sup>731</sup> At probably what is known today as South Cove rather than at Covehithe. 'ACAD, A Cambridge Alumni Database'.

<sup>732</sup> 'ACAD, A Cambridge Alumni Database'; Appendix 1.

The clergy investing finance in the maritime ventures of merchants such as John Peyrs would account for such an amount being held in his custody.

### **Clergy and laity, 1500-1520**

One of the pupils of William Yermouth at Covehithe was John Hopton, the second son of John senior. He went on to Cambridge and became vicar of Reydon in 1470, within a week of the death of Dr Scoles. It was during their combined incumbencies that the building and furnishing of St Edmunds church at Southwold took place and in 1499 Sir John Hopton also became rector of Easton Bavents on William Bosewell's death.<sup>733</sup> The bishop of the diocese of Norwich also died in 1499 and the administration of the diocese passed into the hands of the archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal John Morton, for five months. The record of this vacancy has survived in a *sede vacante* register which provides valuable insight into the diocese at this date and records both the institution of John Hopton and the will of William Bosewell.<sup>734</sup> In 1466 Hopton was recorded as being Master of *Domus Dei* at Dunwich before his appointment at Reydon with Southwold.<sup>735</sup> In that same year, 4s was paid from the Hopton bailiff at Blythburgh for a haircut for him and his brothers, perhaps referring to the other six brethren he was in charge of at *Domus Dei*.<sup>736</sup> Hopton was recorded at Cambridge, studying canon law in 1469.<sup>737</sup> A case of his suspected ill conduct and subsequent loss of money, brought to the equitable Chancery Courts between 1486-1493 by two inhabitants of Southwold, illustrates a different side to the relationship between the maritime merchants and the local clergy.<sup>738</sup> Richard and Henry Joy both given as of the town of Southwold, executors of the will of John Joy, had been tasked with sourcing a 'Crismatorie', for holding consecrated anointing oil, for Southwold church, with £12 bequeathed towards the cost. The Joy(e) family had moved to Southwold from Easton at some point post 1431 and were successful maritime

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<sup>733</sup> Richmond and Child have suggested that one of the two figures carved at the end of the stalls in Southwold church are representations of John Hopton. John Child, *Southwold at Prayer, Churches in Southwold Up To 1900* (Southwold: Southwold Museum & Historical Society, 2011), 5; Richmond, *John Hopton*, 135 fn. 124.

<sup>734</sup> Christopher Harper-Bill, ed., *The Register of John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1486-1500: Volume III, Norwich Sede Vacante, 1499*, Canterbury and York Society 89 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), 26,100.

<sup>735</sup> William Page, ed., *The Victoria History of the County of Suffolk*, Reprinted 1975, vol. 1 (London: Archibald Constable & Company Limited, 1911), 138.

<sup>736</sup> Richmond had 1466 as the date John possibly went up to Cambridge as he had left the Covehithe school by this date, Richmond, *John Hopton*, 134.

<sup>737</sup> 'ACAD, A Cambridge Alumni Database'.

<sup>738</sup> Chancery Pleadings, 1486-1493, C1/98/17, TNA.

merchants with connections to Robert Felaw of Ipswich.<sup>739</sup> They approached John Hopton, who subsequently had dealings with a goldsmith of Cambridge who promised to supply such a vessel ‘noon should be like unto yt in Suffolk’, for the price of £18. Hopton purchased £9 of silver and asked the Joys to send him the remaining £8 13s 4d towards the cost, which they did via a servant. A year and a half later they were still waiting for the promised vessel and sent demands on many occasions for it to be delivered or have their money returned. The outcome of the case is not known. Had John Hopton also been ‘fleeced’ by the silversmith and had his silver stolen? Whatever the outcome, both Henry and Richard Joy can be found as litigants in other chancery cases and common plea hearings indicating they were prepared to use both the equity and law courts to ensure their financial affairs were clarified.<sup>740</sup>

John Hopton’s institution as rector at Easton in 1499 also consolidated the control of the Hopton family within the area surrounding the Blyth river. They were now either manorial lords and/or rectors of the parishes at Blythburgh, Walberswick, Southwold, Reydon and at Easton Bavents. There is no record of Hopton’s death or will and new rectors were instituted at Reydon with Southwold in 1503 and John Thurne at Easton in 1507 indicating Hopton died c.1503-1507.

A visitation of the parishes in the Suffolk and Sudbury archdeaconries was conducted in 1499 and two cases of fornication were heard regarding Easton Bavents inhabitants and penances imposed on those accused.<sup>741</sup> These were just two of twenty-three cases heard regarding fornication between single people during that visitation. The church and clergy were greatly interested in such breaches of canon law and of sexual morality as such relations outside marriage and without procreative potential were deemed sinful.<sup>742</sup> The cases provided a glimpse of two women who would otherwise not have featured in surviving documentation. Marion Reynes and John Coke both admitted to carnal intercourse whilst single but subsequently married. As a penance they both had to walk barefoot from the font to the high altar of St Nicholas and offer a candle before the principal image. James Tompson however, when accused of fornication with Joan Hervy whilst both single, denied the charge when called to answer the visitation at Halesworth church. He had to purge himself

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<sup>739</sup> They owned property called ‘Joyes’ adjoining the Churchway in Easton, listed in the survey of c.1431. Later owned by Walter Piers who bequeathed it in his will of 1505.

<sup>740</sup> In 1547 a crismatorie of silver and gilt was sold by Southwold churchwardens. E310/510, f.142r, TNA.

<sup>741</sup> Harper-Bill, *Register of John Morton*, 179–80.

<sup>742</sup> Harper-Bill, 5; Keith Wrightson, ed., *A Social History of England 1500-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 343.

at the next court with the aid of four neighbours and his case was then dismissed. The two deponents who lived in Easton and raised the charges to be brought to the notice of the visitation were Walter Piers/Peers, the maritime merchant and Robert Hakon, a yeoman assessed on £4 worth of goods in 1524 and both of standing within the community.<sup>743</sup> Walter Piers in his will, written in 1504, indicated the strength of his religion and his pious wishes with his long list of requests. He requested to be buried within the church; gave £5 to buy a new cope for the rector; 10s for the guild priest per year for four years; for twenty years he wished to have an obit along with 6s 8d distributed to ringers and poor folk; a lawful priest to sing for his soul for two years and to receive nine marks as his stipend; and finally, each day, the priest was also to say '*De profundis*' after mass and cast Holy Water onto Walter's grave.<sup>744</sup> This intoning of the deceased's name after Mass was a sharp reminder to the living of their religious obligations.<sup>745</sup>

Within the wills of the inhabitants of Easton between 1446 and 1528 there were numerous monetary bequests not only to the church at Easton but also to the various religious houses in the vicinity of Easton and further afield. The money was generally bequeathed for the purpose of intercessory prayers at the time of the funeral to aid the passage through purgatory or for purchasing an obit and reinforced the sense of continuation and negated the sense of bereavement.<sup>746</sup> The obit had originated in the monasteries where an annual commemoration of the dead was effected with a mass, a bequest to the house, and a dole to the poor.<sup>747</sup> Between 1446 and 1475, six bequests were made for trentals to be sung by either the Carmelite friars at Great Yarmouth or the Augustine friars of South Town at a general cost of 10s.<sup>748</sup> Thomas Newton, Carmelite friar of Great Yarmouth, was specifically named to perform the task in three of these wills and must therefore have had some connection or relevance to the parishioners of Easton, although none has been discovered.<sup>749</sup> By the 1480s the general allegiance had switched to the friaries at Dunwich. Henry Totemay requested a 'Gregory trental as faste as it may be done after myn desesse at the Blakke friary of Dunwich' and in 1510 maritime merchant John Cornelyce requested a Gregory trental for himself, his wife and his friends at Greyfriars of Dunwich and a

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<sup>743</sup> Hervey, *Suffolk* 1524, 86.

<sup>744</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>745</sup> Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:119.

<sup>746</sup> Middleton-Stewart, 17:1.

<sup>747</sup> Middleton-Stewart, 17:137, fn's 1 and 2.

<sup>748</sup> Wills of Katrine Wollman, 1446, Edmund Cok, 1455, Katherine Melle, 1456, Katherine Nottingham, 1465, John Cook snr, 1473, Richard Chylderhouse, 1475, Appendix 1

<sup>749</sup> Katrine Wollman, 1446, Edmund Cok, 1455, Katherine Melle, 1456, Appendix 1.

further trental at the Blackfriars as well. Locally the Austin friary at Gorleston had acquired the indulgence of Scala Coeli and John Dawson left 10s for the specific mass to be celebrated for him and his friends in 1525, one of the last such requests witnessed in the will bequests before the Reformation.<sup>750</sup>

### Clergy and Laity – 1520-1600

The incumbency of William Sponer between 1523 and 1557 was a period which not only witnessed the start of the economic decline and major coastal changes occurring at Easton Bavents but was also the start of a time of huge religious upheaval.<sup>751</sup> The practices around the belief in purgatory were being systematically dismantled by the Crown and Eamon Duffy has popularised the term the ‘Stripping of the Altars’ to describe these changes.<sup>752</sup>

William Sponer was part of a wealthy successful family and was the brother of James Sponer, maritime merchant, discussed earlier. Their cousin was Richard Sponer, gent, of Seething and as there is no record of the family in north-east Suffolk prior to 1502 it is assumed the family moved from Norfolk during the late 1490s to take advantage of the buoyant economic situation at Easton.<sup>753</sup> The Sponers of Seething were also related to the Peirs/Peers/Pyres family as Alice, the wife of John Peirs (probably the nephew of John and Elizabeth Peers who died in 1505 and 1508) was the daughter of Richard Sponer of Seething.<sup>754</sup> William Sponer was resident in the parish as is evidenced in his inclusion as supervisor, executor or witness to thirteen of the twenty-seven wills proven of Easton for the period 1528-1557. With his brother James as farmer or lessee of the manor in 1531, the Sponer brothers would have had both spiritual and economic control and influence over a large swath of the population of the parish during the 1530s until James’s death in 1537. They both had strong economic connections with the mariners and merchants, including the immigrants from the Low Countries in Easton and in Southwold. The manorial court roll of 1532/3

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<sup>750</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>751</sup> It is possible that Sponer achieved his BA in 1514/5, see – Spooner, ‘ACAD, A Cambridge Alumni Database’.

<sup>752</sup> Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, xiv–xviii; See also, Margaret Aston, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>753</sup> A John Sponer of Easton is recorded in 1502 in a common plea case. ‘CP40 Indices’, CP40/959, 1502, f.338.

<sup>754</sup> James Sponer makes his cousin Richard Sponer of Seething one of his executors. He also does not mention a son John but does mention a nephew John. Will of James Sponer, 1537, Appendix 1. Chancery case lists Alice Peirs wife of John Peirs of Easton and daughter of Richard Sponer of Seething, 1518-1529, C1/552/59, TNA.

illustrated examples of these close community and economic connections. It recorded William Sponer selling a villein tenement in Easton to David Becke and James Sponer purchased free land from Katherine Rowle, a widow, although neither attended court on this occasion.<sup>755</sup> David Becke was the nephew of Downey Becke, immigrant mariner, who in his will of 1528 left a half share of his vessel to be sold to Richard Sponer, James's son for £22. Becke also owned property in Southwold. Katherine Rowle's husband Edward, another first-generation immigrant, had died in 1531 and left property and land for her to sell. Both William and James Sponer were witnesses to the will, along with Edward's brother John as executor, another immigrant.

As rector, William Sponer's will bequests, written in July 1557, illustrate a sharp contrast to the long list of pious directions left by Walter Piers fifty years earlier and reflect the changes to new practices and poor relief. He left five shillings to my Lords Grammar School at Norwich, possibly indicating where he had received his education. Being childless, all his land and houses in Easton, Gisleham, Rushmere and Carlton Colville (inherited from various members of the Sponer and Peers families) were left to his nephew Walter Peirse. His godson, William Petyrson, son of immigrant Davy, was ensured a supply of meat, drink, clothing and work. Sponer provided tangible relief to 'Mother Brancaster, who shall have meat and drink as often as she will come to my house for it' and for the poor general inhabitants of Easton, a milk cow and her calf were provided to supply milk and food for seven years. Harry Brankaster, mariner, wrote his will in 1508 when he was planning to sail 'with god's grace' to Iceland. It was proved later that year.<sup>756</sup> He left a wife, two daughters and a son, Richard, whom he thought wished to become a priest. It is feasible that 'Mother Brancaster' was Harry's widow, Agnes, whose son had become a priest, daughters married and had fallen on harder times.

The wills of the inhabitants of Easton for this period also reflect the change in the direction of bequests. Duffy argues that many historians have erroneously used the evidence from wills to assess the impact of reform on the population of Tudor England, and they have taken the changing patterns of testators' provision for masses and prayers to ease themselves through purgatory switching to a provision for the upkeep of the poor as an indicator of shifting beliefs. Duffy argues there were more underlying external pressures at play and funds left for such purposes, and for associated acts of charity, were eventually diverted to parish poor-boxes.<sup>757</sup> In 1541

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<sup>755</sup> Court Roll, 1532/3, Box 793/Roll 13 m.3, BA.

<sup>756</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>757</sup> Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 510–11.

Robert Amis and Henry Lawson, both mariners, were the last to make bequests to the 'high altar' to ease their way through purgatory. John Boty, seven years later in 1548, was the first to leave a bequest to the poor man's box of Easton.<sup>758</sup> The last recorded bequest to the poor man's box was in 1569, with a total of £1 1s being left to it in seven separate bequests over the period of twenty years.

In 1562 John Foxe was instituted to the parish church. He must have been a busy rector or more probably one who collected 'livings' as he also was recorded as the incumbent at the parishes of South Cove, Reydon with Southwold and Covehithe. Nothing further is known about Foxe. He was not listed as a witness or executor in wills proven by Easton inhabitants in the period 1562-1592.<sup>759</sup> Foxe was the last recorded, instituted rector of the church of St Nicholas.

Requests for burial within the churchyard at St Nicholas ceased in 1587, indicating that the church was in imminent peril from the sea. In this year, three separate testators wrote their wills requesting burials within it, therefore one must assume they believed it would be their final place of rest.<sup>760</sup> With no surviving parish registers for Easton, and none prior to 1602 for Southwold or 1712 for Reydon, it is impossible to trace the exact year that burials for Easton inhabitants started to take place in the neighbouring churchyards. A burial of Beatrice Peirce, late of Easton was the first recorded at South Cove, in 1596, whilst at Covehithe, John Birde of Easton was buried in 1612.<sup>761</sup> In 1590 when Edward Blinkhorne was instituted, it was only to the rectory of the parish of Easton. The church of St Nicholas appears to have no longer been in use and its demise will be discussed more fully in the following chapter.

## Conclusion

An examination of the testamentary evidence left by the clergy and laity of Easton Bavents allied with the official diocesan record has allowed a partial reconstitution of the ecclesiastical institutions of the parish. The partial refurbishment of the parish church of St Nicholas took place between c.1470-1530 and included bequests from the newly arrived immigrant population who were assimilating themselves into the community. This corresponds with the evidence for a maritime-fuelled economic

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<sup>758</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>759</sup> No reference of Foxe can be found in the Covehithe parish registers 1559-1600 or in South Cove registers 1554-1600. Covehithe register 119/D1/1, South Cove register, 146/D1/1, 1538-1723, SA.

<sup>760</sup> John Newell, Agnes Large and Alice Catterson, Appendix 1.

<sup>761</sup> 146/D1/1 and 119/D1/1, SA.

boom around the same time. The presence of a group of educated clergymen able to provide teaching and instructions on new technologies to a younger generation of mariners, allied with the fiscal ability to invest in new ventures were also surely contributory factors. By the mid sixteenth century the clergy and laity at Easton were experiencing the effects of the Reformation and were also dealing with dramatic topographical changes impacting on its economy and its landscape, as evidenced by the sale in 1547 of their church goods which provided money to shore up the quay and protect the marshes from flood. Other parishes along this stretch of the north-east Suffolk coast also ploughed money into their churches and guilds as is evidenced by the remaining structures today and Southwold with its rise to Borough status had eclipsed them all economically by the 1550s.

The chapel of St Margaret was originally established in the late fourteenth century and re-built in the 1420s close to the haven, affirming the growth of the maritime economy. It had associations to Osbern Bokenham, pilgrims and pilgrimages and fell out of favour prior to the full effects of the Reformation being introduced, with no recorded references to it in the sixteenth century post 1518.<sup>762</sup> There were no will bequests to the guild of St Mary after 1510 and no evidence of it being active in the years after the Reformation outlawed such institutions. By 1590, St Nicholas appears to have fallen into irreversible decay or may even have been destroyed through erosion. As it moved into the seventeenth century, with no discernible ecclesiastical institutions remaining, the question of whether Easton Bavents retained any sense of a parish community as highlighted by Katherine French earlier, will be discussed in Chapter 8.

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<sup>762</sup> There is no reference to the chapel at Easton within the certificate of free chapels listed in 1546. Redstone, *Chapels, Chantries and Gilds in Suffolk*, 30–71.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Seventeenth century decline**

#### **Introduction**

At the dawn of the seventeenth century the community at Easton Bavents was experiencing coastal change on a dramatic scale and the functioning and thriving maritime community appears to have disappeared. Its haven was now blocked by coastal accretion, part of the Easton river valley and lower-lying land had flooded, and coastal erosion of the cliff-lined ness had increased due to the loss of the protection afforded by the Barnard sandbank. Easton had suffered the loss of its coastal and overseas maritime trade, and 1584 was the last date of any evidential record of a testator bequeathing fishing equipment.<sup>763</sup> This chapter focuses on examining the extent of topographical changes to the coastline over the seventeenth century witnessed in extant maps and coastal navigational charts. The population was in serious decline as witnessed in the decline between 1524 and 1603, from an estimated 324 inhabitants to only 109, therefore further changes in the population rate and economic wealth will be charted to c.1674. The business and composition of the manorial court also provides information to help us understand how the community dealt with the dynamic coastal changes. Finally, echoing French's statement from Chapter 7, with the loss of the parish church around 1590, Easton did not retain any sense of a parish community, much less a maritime community, with its accompanying networks of support.

#### **Topographical evidence from maps and marine charts**

Between the publication of Saxton's map of Suffolk in 1575 and John Kirby's county map in 1736, all the successive county maps for atlases were copied more less blatantly from those of Christopher Saxton.<sup>764</sup> The implication is that the cartographic features were not updated to capture changes in the coastline and consequently the contours of the coast and the tadpole-shaped stretch of water lying between Easton

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<sup>763</sup> Mackerel nets are left by James Catterson. Appendix 1.

<sup>764</sup> John Blatchly, *John Kirby's Suffolk: His Maps And Roadbook*, ed. David Dymond, Suffolk Records Society, XLVII (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), xi.

and Covehithe continued to be reproduced to the same delineation.<sup>765</sup> Local records confirm that a sand and shingle bar had sealed off the old haven. For example, the burial register for Covehithe records that that Stephen Longe was drowned ‘in the broade water’ at Covehithe in June 1610 and as discussed in Chapter 5, c.1650, a manorial document relating to property of Mr Playters described ‘about a thousand acres of water & marshes now lying improvable between these two manors [Covhyth and Esson Bavent]’.<sup>766</sup> Later cartographic evidence illustrates how this original, large, tadpole-shaped body of water was eventually split into two separate entities as the coastline was driven back through erosion to form the bodies of water now known as Easton and Covehithe Broads. Recent evidence of back flooding into the Easton river valley confirms that the initial flooding and creation of the single broad occurred around the 1560-1575 period. Maps created between 1783 and 2011 illustrate how as low, sandy land had been eroded from the beach, the ‘tadpole’ body of water was driven westwards through erosion and divided into two. The trees of Easton wood, standing on higher ground are now on the coastline edge as erosion continues, and as the cliff recedes so the distance between the two bodies of water increases. The 1884 Geological map of Suffolk, discussed in Chapter 2, illustrates the historic river valley section at Covehithe and how small Covehithe Broad had become. It was still shown as a very small body of water up until the eve of the 1953 flood surge when water surged back into the river valley at both Easton and Covehithe. For a fuller description and chronology of these events, see Appendix 9.

During the seventeenth century the printing and publication of coastal charts for the use of mariners increased, although as with the re-use of earlier survey information for the county maps of atlases, their reliability must be questioned.<sup>767</sup> The 1585 coastal chart of Suffolk and Norfolk by Lucas Janz Waghenaer’s ‘Spieghel der Zeevaerd’ or Sea Mirror contained glaring errors in its labelling of place names.<sup>768</sup> In 1588, when the chart was translated into English, ‘Ees’ was labelled as Easton on the

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<sup>765</sup> Examples include maps of Suffolk by Johannes (Jan) Jansson, 1647, MC4/6, SA; Robert Morden, 1695, MC4/8, SA; Hermon Moll, 1724, MC4/10, SA.

<sup>766</sup> Covehithe register, 1559-1731, 119/D1/1, SA; Mr Playter’s particulars, c.1680 (undated), CUL 1548, Cambridge University Library. This document although catalogued as c.1680 is thought to date to c.1650. See Chapter 5.

<sup>767</sup> Examples include, Willem Janszoon Blaeu, *The Light of Navigation*. (Amsterdam: William Johnson, 1612), <https://historicaltexts.jisc.ac.uk/eebo-99852445e>; Jacob Aertsz Colom, *The Ferie Sea-Columne*, The third edition. (By Iacob Columne, on the Water in the Ferie Columne., 1640), EBSCO; Thomas Jenner, *A Description & Plat of the Sea-Coasts of England* (London: M. S. for Tho: Jenner, 1653).

<sup>768</sup> This chart includes glaring errors in the labelling of place-names at Dunwich and Southwold. “Spieghel Der Zeevaerd” by Waghenaer, Special Collections’, 1585 edition, 125.

English version of the chart, even though it stood slightly inland and there was an unlabelled church on the coastline directly in-line with Ees to the east.<sup>769</sup> When viewed from the sea, the sequence of church towers between Southwold and Benacre would include those visible on the high ground in the parishes of South Cove and Reydon and even potentially Wangford, Frostenden and Wrentham. Therefore it is more likely that this church tower, often referred to in the seventeenth century as Easton's tower, within these coastal charts, was in fact that of Reydon, standing on a high point 15 metres above sea level, directly west and inland only just over a mile from where Easton church originally stood.<sup>770</sup> It was not until the coastline was re-surveyed in detail by John Seller in 1671 that the erroneous references to Easton tower disappear from the written accompanying instructions, and thereafter it is not depicted on any chart.<sup>771</sup>

As a consequence of the errors described above, using topographical map evidence to ascertain the date at which the church of St Nicholas at Easton no longer existed is impossible. As discussed in Chapter 7, archival evidence indicates that by 1590, St Nicholas appears to have fallen into irreversible decay or may even have been destroyed through erosion. In 1754 Gardner stated that the church of St Nicholas at Easton had 'long since been swallowed up by the sea' but did not place any date upon this event.<sup>772</sup> John Kirby in 1764 suggested that the church was still in existence in 1638 and subsequently this date and also the date of c.1666 has featured in the historiography of the parish as the date of the church's demise.<sup>773</sup> Yet these dates do not stand up to close scrutiny, and it is argued later in this chapter that they should be discounted: the church had already disappeared by then.

After extensive research, due to the problems discussed above, it has not been possible to reconstruct a reliable timeline or chronology of coastal cliff erosion at

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<sup>769</sup> See the chart labelled as 'The sea mappe of the north coaste of England betweene Walberswick and Burnham with all the bankes and sholdes there amongst'. Lucas Janszoon Waghenaeer et al., *The Mariners Mirrour: First Made & Set Fourth in Divers Exact Sea-Charts, by That Famous Nauigator Luke Wagenar of Enchuisen and Now Fitted with Necessarie Additions for the Use of Englishmen by Anthony Ashley*. (Printed by John Charlewood, 1588); The 1588 English version was published without the consent of Waghenaeer, Gunter Schilder, 'A Dutch Manuscript Rutter: An Unique Portrait of The European Coasts In The Late Sixteenth Century', *Imago Mundi* 43 (1991): 61.

<sup>770</sup> See volumes at fn.754 above.

<sup>771</sup> John Seller, *The Coasting Pilot* (London, 1671), 7.

<sup>772</sup> Gardner, *An Historical Account of Dunwich*, 259.

<sup>773</sup> Examples include Collections for a history of Suffolk by David Elisha Davy, (c.1761-1851), Add MS 19080-1, BL; The Claude Morley Collection of Topographical and Antiquarian Notes, c.1926, HD603, SA; Blatchly and Northeast, 'A Survey of Lost and Ruined Churches of Suffolk'; Blaxland, *The Easternmost House*, 1.

Easton during the seventeenth century from extant maps and coastal charts.<sup>774</sup> There is evidence however of the flooding and laying to waste of the lower land around the haven area as evidenced in 1650 with the description of 1000 acres of improvable water and marsh lying between Easton and Covehithe.<sup>775</sup> Through the inundation of sea water, the physical structures such as the chapel of St Margaret and housing in that locality would have been impacted upon, along with the ruination of arable and common lands and the salt marshes.

### **Demography and plague, c.1600-1674**

As discussed in Chapter 4, analyses of population fluctuations and taxable wealth within a community over time are essential elements in reconstructing and assessing its changing fortunes. These changes occur for a myriad of reasons including fluctuating birth and death rates, immigration or emigration, and a wider range of economic and topographical forces. The population of England had nearly doubled in size between 1541 to 1656, from an estimated 2.774 million to 5.281 million. This was then followed by a 5% decrease to 1674 before eventually climbing back to reach 5.5 million in 1741.<sup>776</sup> As noted in Chapter 4, Easton's population had dramatically decreased between 1524 and 1603. Deaths from plague during 1602-1603, which ravaged certain parishes in north-east Suffolk, will be examined to understand the effects it dealt to the populace. Figures from the muster returns of 1638 and finally a Hearth Tax return for 1674 will be also examined to ascertain if dramatic population decline continued at Easton, in direct contrast to national trends, throughout the seventeenth century.

Whilst there are no extant parish registers for Easton itself, those for Covehithe, South Cove and Southwold have survived allowing the burial rates for the locality to be examined. The registers for Covehithe and South Cove survive from the mid sixteenth

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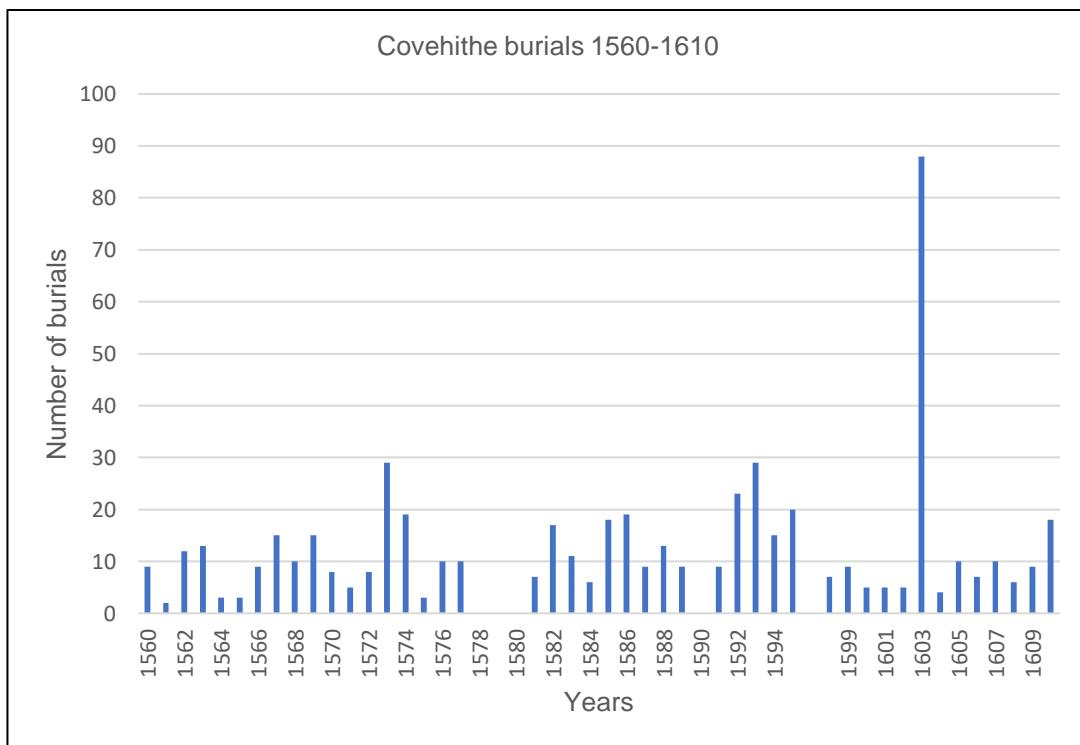
<sup>774</sup> It is noted by Daniel Defoe that Easton Ness has been 'removed' by the sea and that the Burnet (Barnard) sand now lies to the north of Covehithe. Defoe toured Suffolk in the 1720s but the date of the loss of Easton Ness is not recorded. Daniel Defoe, 'A Tour through the Island of Great Britain. Divided into Circuits or Journies. Containing, I. A Description of the Principal Cities and Towns, ... Originally Begun by the Celebrated Daniel De Foe, Continued by the Late Mr. Richardson, ... and Brought down to the Present Time by Gentlemen of Eminence in the Literary World. 1778: Vol 1', 1778, 40, [http://archive.org/details/bim\\_eighteenth-century\\_a-tour-through-the-islan\\_defoe-daniel\\_1778\\_1](http://archive.org/details/bim_eighteenth-century_a-tour-through-the-islan_defoe-daniel_1778_1).

<sup>775</sup> Mr Playter's particulars, c.1680 (undated), CUL 1548, Cambridge University Library.

<sup>776</sup> Wrigley and Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871*, 210.

century, whilst Southwold's survive from 1602.<sup>777</sup> During the years 1602 and 1603, burial rates within parishes on the north-east Suffolk coast rose dramatically as an outbreak of deadly disease swept through the area. Plague was recorded at Lowestoft, Corton, Great Yarmouth and inland at Beccles in the years 1602-1603, as well as at Southwold, Reydon and Covehithe.<sup>778</sup> There had been regular outbreaks of disease attribute to plague throughout the sixteenth century although the complexities of identifying what is termed as a 'local mortality crisis' is complex and has not been attempted here.<sup>779</sup> The crude figures of burials for the years 1560 to 1610 have been plotted for Covehithe and South Cove, as have those for Southwold for the two years of 1602 and 1603 (Figures 24-26).

**Figure 24 – Graph recording burials at Covehithe, 1560-1610**



Note – Data missing for 1578-1580, 1596-1597.

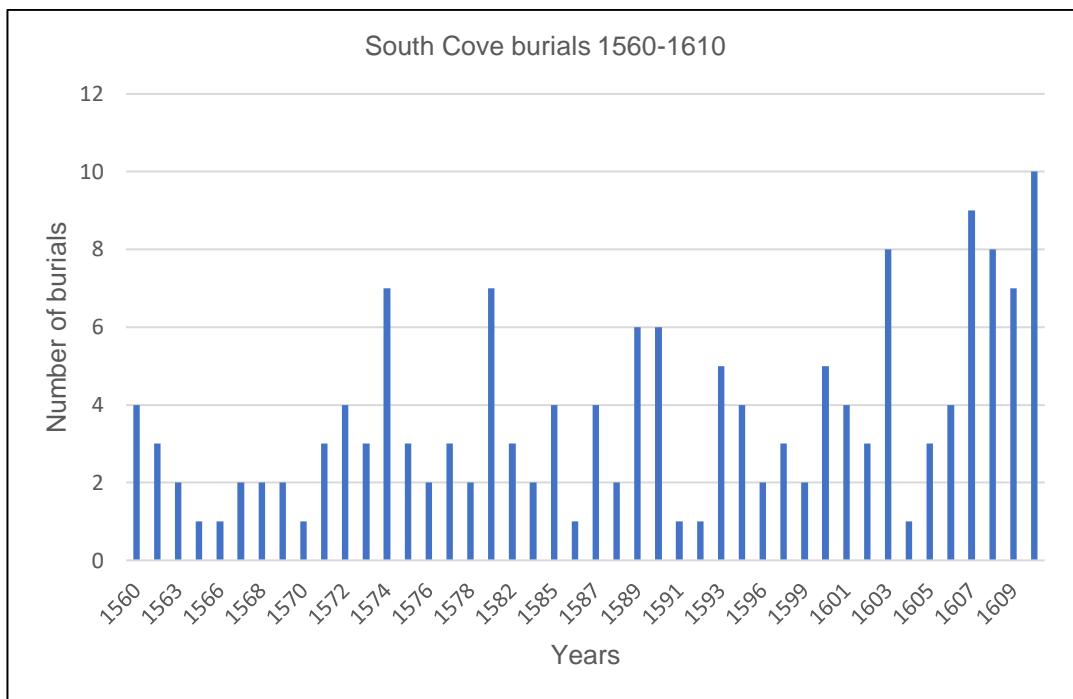
Source – Covehithe register, 119/D1/1, 1560-1610, SFHS Burials CD Rom.

<sup>777</sup> Covehithe register, 1559-1731, 119/D1/1, SA; South Cove register, 1538-1723, 146/D1/1, SA; Southwold register, 1602-1801, 153/D1/1, SA. Transcripts of the registers compiled by the Suffolk Family History Society have been used in the compilation of the statistical information. Suffolk Burial Index, 1538-1900, SFK-BUI-O3, PDF, CD Rom, 2020, SFHS.

<sup>778</sup> In 1602 Beccles recorded 92 burials, in 1603 Lowestoft recorded 280 deaths between May and Sep, Corton recorded 33 deaths, with a population of only c.140. At Yarmouth the outbreak was attributed as coming into the port from Amsterdam. Butcher, *Lowestoft, 1550-1750*, 52, fn. 71 and 72.

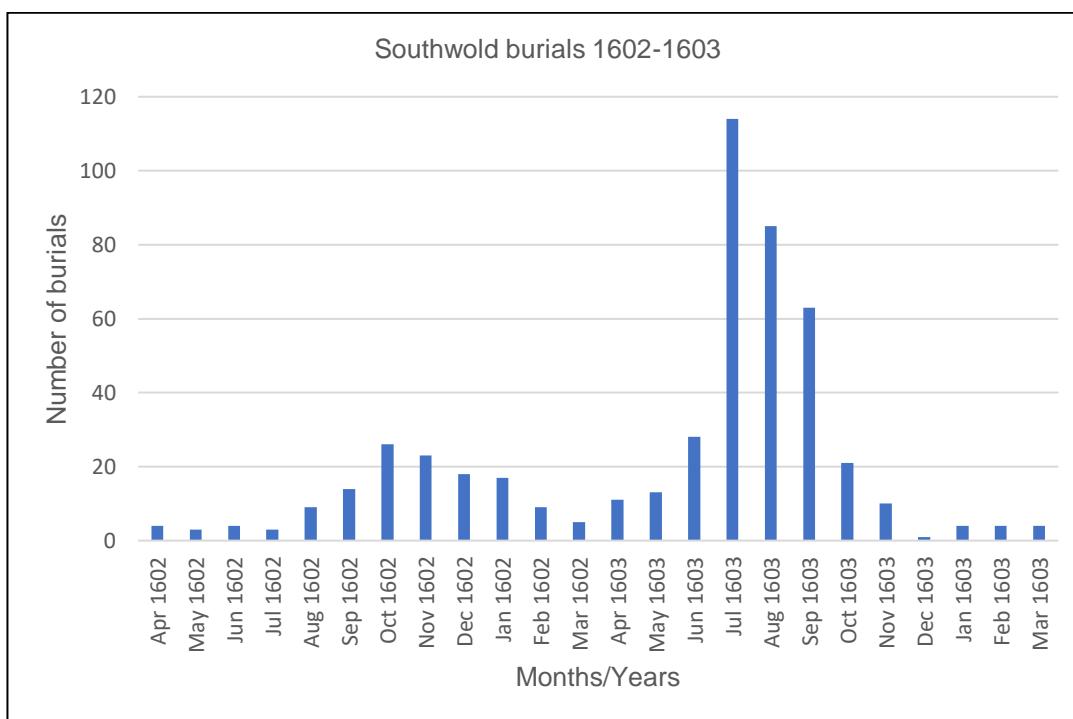
<sup>779</sup> Wrigley and Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871*, Appendix 10, 645-690.

**Figure 25 – Graph recording burials at South Cove, 1560-1610**



Source – South Cove burials, 146/D1/1, 1560-1610, SFHS Burials CD Rom.

**Figure 26 – Graph recording burials at Southwold, 1602-1603**



Source – 153/D1/1, 1602-1603, SFHS Burials CD Rom.

1603 was clearly a year of unusually high deaths and burials at Covehithe and Southwold and at South Cove they recorded the highest burial figure since the start of the register. 1603 was also the year an ecclesiastical return was completed for the Diocese of Norwich, which included the county of Suffolk, in response to a request by Archbishop Whitgift. This listed numbers of communicants within parishes, however none were recorded for Southwold and Reydon because both communities were in the grip of the epidemic during the August date of the return.<sup>780</sup> Easton was recorded as having no parson, which indicated that instead the figure for its population was provided by the Covehithe or South Cove parson and presumably would have been the figure prior to the plague outbreak. From the above figures it is evident that for Covehithe and South Cove the years of 1573-74 and 1579-1580 were also years of increased burials due to plague or possibly to dysentery.<sup>781</sup> Plague was also recorded at Norwich and nearby at Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft in the years 1579-1580.<sup>782</sup>

In 1603, as in other plague years, surrounded on three sides by parishes experiencing serious death rates, it follows that Easton's population would also have suffered from the epidemic. For a parish in decline this would have had catastrophic consequences on the ability of the population to recover its numbers in subsequent years. A growing parish such as Long Melford, Suffolk, which experienced the plague in 1604, had recovered its pre plague population figures and was experiencing increases again by 1609.<sup>783</sup> The long lists of burials at Southwold and at Covehithe only record the names of the deceased and the date they and others were buried. A few names of those known to have lived at Easton during the latter 1590s are recorded, corroborating the demise of the parish church of Easton, but no credible understanding of the total number of Easton parishioners buried at Southwold, Covehithe and South Cove has been possible. In only one or two cases was other information provided, such as at Southwold in September 1602, when it was noted that '2 strangers died, unknown' at the outbreak of the plague that year and perhaps indicates that the disease spread from mariners bringing it into the parish.<sup>784</sup>

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<sup>780</sup> Dyer and Palliser, *Diocesan Population Returns*, lxix.

<sup>781</sup> Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity*, 17:53.

<sup>782</sup> Peter Wade-Martins and Jane Everett, eds., *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk*, 2nd ed. (Norwich: Norfolk Museums Service, 1994), 94; Suckling, *History and Antiquities of Suffolk*, 2:63.

<sup>783</sup> Lyn Boothman, 'The Plague of 1604 in Long Melford', in *Long Melford: The Last 2000 Years*, ed. Elizabeth Wigmore, vol. 5 (Long Melford: Long Melford Historical and Archaeological Society, 2000), 40.

<sup>784</sup> Stewart Mottram, 'Deluge and Disease: Plague, the Poetry of Flooding, and the History of Health Inequalities in Andrew Marvell's Hull', *Seventeenth Century* 38, no. 2 (3 April 2023): 264, 285, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2022.2142656>.

For 1638 another listing of adult men for Suffolk is contained with the return of the Able Men of Suffolk, a muster list of those aged 16-60 who were deemed fit for military service, if required.<sup>785</sup> Whilst muster returns do provide a basis for a population count, Goose and Hinde suggest that due to the difficulties of establishing who within the age range of 16-60 were not deemed fit for military service, the results have to be treated with caution.<sup>786</sup> They suggest an undercount be allowed of 43% for those under the age of 16 and over the age of 60, then a doubling of the count to allow for females. Using this methodology for Easton Bavents the raw figure of 11 males converts to a crude estimate of 39 people (**Table 26**). When compared with the estimated population in 1603 of 109 persons, this figure reinforces the downward trend in the community's population against a backdrop of a rising national population. According to Wrigley and Schofield the population of England increased 20% from an estimated 4.25 million in 1606 to just over 5 million in 1641.<sup>787</sup> This fall in the Easton Bavents population of a possible 65% between 1603 and 1638 would be consistent with dynamic coastal changes and the devastation of a plague epidemic. In 1638 the Southwold burial registers again record an extremely high number of deaths indicating that the town was suffering from a further plague epidemic and as a result there are no extant figures for Southwold within the Able Men of Suffolk returns for that year.<sup>788</sup> Similarly, there are no surviving returns for Kessingland or Benacre meaning no population comparisons can be drawn. Within the Southwold register for 1638-1639 the burials of 8 older people of Easton are recorded. Set against a total estimated population of only 39 people this outbreak of plague would have decimated the population even further.

The final taxation document to be examined is the 1674 Hearth Tax return for Suffolk. First introduced in the 1660s these returns are yet another listing of people, property and the hearths they contained which have been utilised by historians and demographers alike.<sup>789</sup> People were liable to pay one shilling for every fire or stove in

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<sup>785</sup> Musters, Suffolk, 1639, SP16/411, TNA. Charles Edward Banks, *Able Men of Suffolk, 1638: Transcribed from the Original in the Public Record Office, London, English, in the State Papers Domestic, Charles I, Vol. 411, vol. 1*, Publication of the Anglo-American Records Foundation Inc. (Boston: Calkins Press, 1931).

<sup>786</sup> Goose and Hinde, 'Estimating Local Population: Part II', 80.

<sup>787</sup> Wrigley and Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871*, 208-9.

<sup>788</sup> 36 burials are recorded in 1637, 97 are recorded in 1638, including 4 men from Iceland, 46 are recorded in 1639. Southwold register, 1602-1801, 153/D1/1, SA.

<sup>789</sup> Margaret Spufford, 'The Scope of Local History, and the Potential of the Hearth Tax Returns', *The Local Historian* 30, no. 4 (2000): 1-20; Catherine Ferguson, 'The Hearth Tax and the Poor in Post-Restoration Woking', in *Faith, Place and People in Early Modern England*, ed. Trevor Dean, Glyn Parry,

their house, twice a year, at Michaelmas in September and on Lady Day in March. Initially there were no exemptions, and no distinction made between owners and occupiers. The Suffolk return, for 1674 was in response to a later act which decreed that those who were then exempt from paying still had to be listed, providing information on some of the poorest in the parishes as well as the richest. Butcher noted discrepancies within the Suffolk returns stating that at least 80 houses have not been accounted for within the Lowestoft returns.<sup>790</sup> Difficulties in using these returns, highlighted by Goose and Hinde, include the allowance to be made for paupers, who they state do not appear in the returns, even amongst those listed as exempt from taxation and the persistent problem determining an appropriate figure for the household multiplier.<sup>791</sup>

The Suffolk 1674 Hearth Tax lists have been edited and published by Hervey, whose entry for Easton Bavents comprised 4 persons with hearths which were taxable and a further three persons who were 'poore & noe distresse', plus one Robert Seaman whose hearth was listed as 'demolished'.<sup>792</sup> One house, that belonged to John Leece, accounted for four hearths and Thomas Mafney in another house had three.<sup>793</sup> Robert Seaman, whose hearth was listed as demolished, does not appear in the index under another parish within Suffolk, therefore he has been included in the base figure of 8 persons. Using the Goose and Hinde suggestion of a 5% allowance for paupers and using a 4.5 household multiplier provides a population estimate of 38. The returns for Covehithe reveals impoverishment with nearly half of its total population listed as being 'certified for', whilst in contrast South Cove and Reydon are not returning any long lists of poor or those needing certification. Southwold's situation is subtly different. A severe fire in the town in 1659 is generally credited with sending the town into an economic decline and spiral of disaster, from which it would take 80 years to recover.<sup>794</sup> Here in 1674, from a total of 215 separate households recorded, 125 are

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and Edward Vallance (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer Limited, 2018), 111–31, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781787441934.007>; Heather Falvey, 'Assessing an Early Modern Fenland Population: Whittlesey (Cambridgeshire)', *Local Population Studies*, no. 92 (2014): 7–23.

<sup>790</sup> Butcher, *Lowestoft, 1550–1750*, 82.

<sup>791</sup> Goose and Hinde, 'Estimating Local Population: Part II', 84.

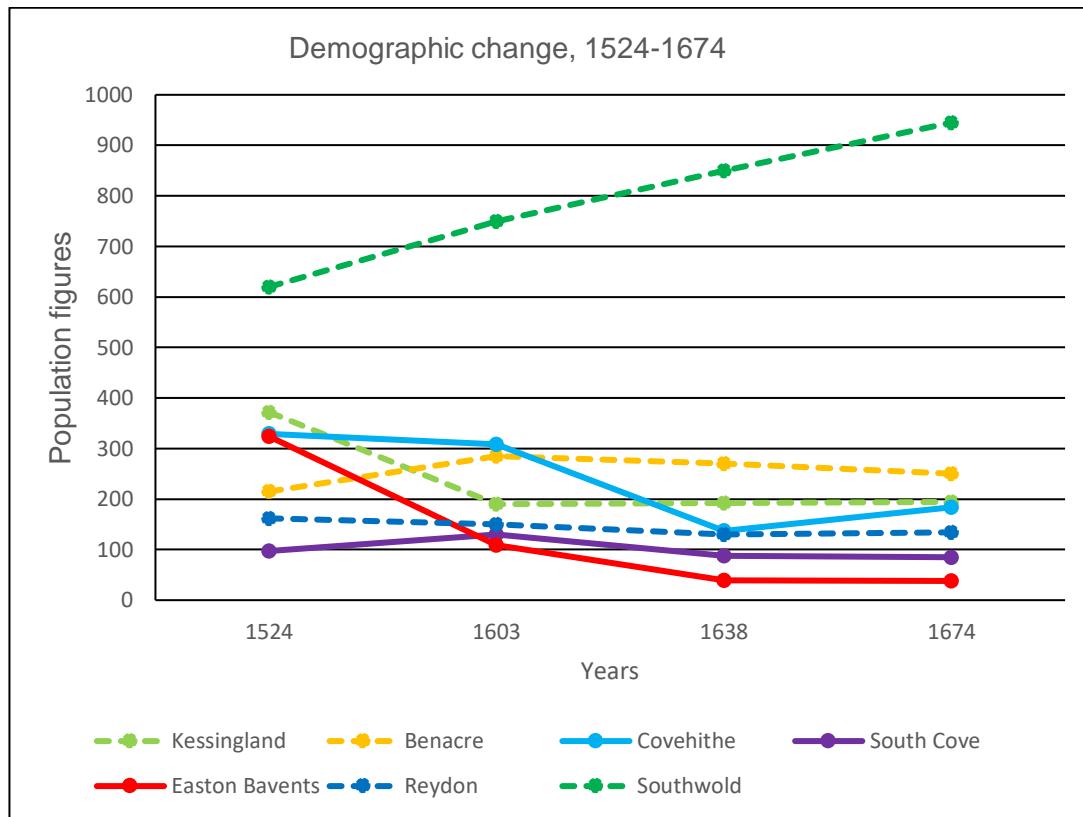
<sup>792</sup> Sydenham Henry Augustus Hervey, *Suffolk in 1674, Being the Hearth Tax Returns*, Suffolk Green Books, XI (Woodbridge: George Booth, 1905), 97.

<sup>793</sup> It is probable that these two houses with multiple hearths were those occupied in 1598 by the two listed for tax in the lay subsidy discussed in Chapter 4 under taxable wealth.

<sup>794</sup> Bottomley, *A Short History*, 8.

listed as certified and 15 are empty. Only 75 households are liable to pay any hearth tax.<sup>795</sup> For a summary of these findings (**Table 26** and Figure 27).

Figure 27 – Graph recording demographic change, 1524-1674



Note – Those parishes shown with dotted lines have some missing data for 1603 and 1638. The figures for 1524 and 1674 are recorded.

Sources – See Tables 4 and 26.

After the dramatic decline in population between 1603 and 1638, a comparison of the population estimates for Easton between 1638 and 1674 show they remained relatively stable although it could be argued that there has been a small drop in the number of households. In 1638 there were potentially 11 male household heads, plus there would surely be a further unknown quantity of households of widows. In 1674 there are only 7 households listed, plus the 'demolished' property belonging to Robert Seaman.

Thus, during the course of the seventeenth century the population of Easton Bavents was in serious decline, with Covehithe, Kessingland, Reydon and South Cove

<sup>795</sup> Hervey, *Suffolk 1674*, 253–55, 291–92.

witnessing declining populations, although not to the same scale. Coastal change was creating challenges for a number of these communities, yet it also created opportunities elsewhere, hence Benacre experienced a slight increase, but Southwold's population growth outstripped them all.

### **Taxable wealth, 1641-1674**

In Chapter 4 the taxable wealth of Easton was compared over the period 1327-1598 through analysis of the lay subsidies. By the turn of the seventeenth century Easton had witnessed a decline in its land values in comparison with neighbouring parishes and its percentage contribution of tax declined. However, although the number of those assessed for paying tax had dramatically reduced, those that did pay tax saw their assessable wealth rise. The taxation assessments for a subsidy, raised by Charles I in 1641, to aid 'further relief of his Majesty's Army' and the Hearth Tax listings for 1674 allow further analysis of Easton's taxable wealth as its population continued to dramatically decline.<sup>796</sup>

The subsidy of 1641 was assessed on individuals and corporations, who were to pay 5s 4d per pound for their moveable goods worth £3 or more and 8s per pound for lands worth 20s or more per annum. Further criteria were laid out for aliens and recusants although none appear in the Easton listings. Due to the vagrancies of the recording of the collection it has not been possible to compare data with the comparator parishes, only overall amounts paid (**Table 27**).

At Easton there were 15 assessments for lands, totalling £2 12s 6d, 8 assessments for stock, totalling 6s 11d and 5s assessed for tithes. Of the 15 separate land assessments, 13 were for portions of land occupied or being worked by another person. The largest percentage payers of tax on such land were Sir William Playters, MP for Orford and the manorial lord at this date, who paid 34%; John Benefice, who lived at Southwold but was originally from an older Easton family, paid 26% and Daniel Jiggles who lived at Southwold, 21%. 12 other men, 19% of the total, were assessed on tax for the remaining parcels of land. Only 4 of the smaller tax payers can be identified as resident at Easton, with the land being worked or occupied in total by 11 resident men. The 8 men listed on the value of their stock all worked or occupied land but were not assessed for tax on land holdings. The returns for this

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<sup>796</sup> Two subsidies grant, E 179/183/550 pt. 2, 1641, TNA; 1641 Subsidy list, transcript, HD11/1/4291/10.14, n.d., V. Redstone, SA. Hervey, *Suffolk 1674*.

subsidy confirm the base population count of 11 men in 1638. It also confirms that as in 1598 the land was in the hands of a few wealthy owners who did not live in the parish.

A crude comparison of the taxable wealth of the parish with its neighbours finds Easton paying the least tax. A comparison of the amounts raised by Easton, Covehithe (Northales) and Southwold for the 1598 and 1641 subsidies indicate that Southwold experienced a decrease in its taxable wealth effecting a rise in the small contributions paid by Easton and Covehithe.

For the 1674 Hearth Tax assessments Wrightson and Levine state that 'it is clear that the number of hearths on which individual householders were assessed provides a guide to the housing standards within the village'.<sup>797</sup> Margaret Spufford has argued convincingly that 'in general an incontrovertible association existed between wealth and house size' and that Hearth Tax assessments can provide 'a guide to status and wealth in general'.<sup>798</sup> The data from the 1674 returns for the comparator communities follow the division of social status as proposed by Wrightson and Levine (**Table 28**).<sup>799</sup>

Southwold's urban standing was reflected in its wide range of wealth, possessing seven large properties belonging to wealthy residents but also it had a high proportion (43%) of its housing stock at the lower end of the social scale. At Covehithe, Kessingland and Southwold over 50% of households were excused from payment owing to their poverty. Easton returned by far the lowest number of assessable households of 8 in 1674 whilst Southwold returned the highest at 215. This simple fact perfectly illustrates the gulf between the fortunes of these neighbours, which had occurred over the previous three centuries and confirms unequivocally that Easton was now a small and greatly depopulated community. Easton and Covehithe had no households which would qualify for gentry or large farmer status indicating that those with the greatest wealth have moved out of these villages whilst Benacre still retained one such household. In contrast, in the 1524 Lay Subsidy for Easton Bavents, the lessee of the manor, James Sponer, had been resident within the community, and was assessed for the 'Anticipation' payment, which only those of higher ranking and worth were liable to pay.<sup>800</sup> A John Leece was listed in Easton in 1674 as owning a house with 4 hearths. His father (or he himself) had died in 1672 and in his

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<sup>797</sup> Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety, Terling*, 35.

<sup>798</sup> Wrightson and Levine, 35 quoting Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities. English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 39, 41.

<sup>799</sup> Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety, Terling*, 35.

<sup>800</sup> Hervey, *Suffolk 1524*, 409.

nuncupative will he said he was a yeoman, which, correctly correlates with Wrightson and Terlings allocation of hearths to social positions.<sup>801</sup>

### **Flooding, accretion and reclamation**

In 1609 a commission had been established to investigate recent sea flooding along the coastline in east Norfolk and included the area of north Suffolk at least as far south as Kirkley.<sup>802</sup> An associated act had been passed in 1608 entitled 'An Act for the speedy recovery of many thousands of acres of marsh ground in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, lately surrounded by the rage of the sea'.<sup>803</sup> Whilst the majority of the 16 communities in Suffolk, named as affected by the flooding, lay in the Waveney valley, Kirkley and two unidentifiable parishes called 'Barkley and Shepton' are listed geographically last and could potentially relate to the area of coastline between Kirkley and Southwold.<sup>804</sup> By 1618 Southwold was experiencing severe difficulties relating to flooding and accretion. Access to the haven was affected and also resulted in the town being described within a printed national appeal for finance to improve the situation, as 'an island surrounded with water'.<sup>805</sup> There are indications here that the area of Woods End Creek which formed Southwold's northern boundary with Easton Bavents had flooded, impacting on Easton as well. Small areas of marshland and ruined flooded land had attempted to be reclaimed in north-east Suffolk from at least the twelfth century as evidenced within the records of Blythburgh Priory.<sup>806</sup> This small-scale piecemeal reclamation had continued and by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century at Walberswick, an attempt to enclose and reclaim common marshy land led to murder and ensuing unrest, described in detail by Warner.<sup>807</sup> By the mid-1650s there is no record of any larger scale attempts at reclamation in the area even though in areas of flooding and sedimentation, reclamation and improvement had by 1650 become relatively straightforward due to the Dutch method of land reclamation, brought to England by Cornelieus Vermuyden, of Zeeland, during

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<sup>801</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>802</sup> Barbara Cornford, 'The Sea Breach Commission in East Norfolk', *Norfolk Archaeology* XXXVII, no. 2 (1979): 137–45.

<sup>803</sup> Act for the speedy recovery of many thousands of acres, 1609, 741/HA12/E1/3/2, SA.

<sup>804</sup> The sea breach was not recorded as penetrating the Blyth valley at this date.

<sup>805</sup> *James by the Grace of God King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland ... to All People to Whome These Our Letters Patents Shall Come, Greeting* (London: Thomas Purfoot, 1618), <https://data.historicaltexts.jisc.ac.uk/view?pubId=eebo-ocm33151034e>.

<sup>806</sup> Christopher Harper-Bill, ed., *The Cartulary of Blythburgh Priory Part One*, Suffolk Charters, II (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer Limited, 1980), 22.

<sup>807</sup> Warner, *Bloody Marsh*.

the 1630s and 1640s.<sup>808</sup> The volume of un-reclaimed derelict land and salt marsh on the Suffolk coastline was recorded in another government commission of 1664.<sup>809</sup> Burrell notes that of the 30 parishes listed there was approximately 4,000 acres of salt marsh and wetlands with the majority laying in north Suffolk at Blythburgh, Walberswick (37 acres) Reydon (200 acres) and Wangford (150 acres) suggesting that little, if any land had been reclaimed by this date.<sup>810</sup> The original document is in poor condition and difficult to read and although land at Covehithe, Easton and around Potters Bridge is described, the acreages of 'mariscus salsus' and 'derelict land' are illegible.<sup>811</sup>

### The manor and community

As discussed in Chapter 5, it was initially thought no manorial court records for Easton had survived post 1611, however, a draft court book for Easton Bavents with Empoles, 1641-1689, came to light in the latter stages of research, within an uncatalogued collection of solicitors records. The book covers parts of the period of ownership of the manor by the Playters family and the start of the period of ownership by the Howland family who purchased the manor c.1650, with a view to improve the flooded land and marshes through drainage and reclamation.<sup>812</sup>

The discovery of the court book enables the contents of the manorial courts held at Easton for 1643 and 1645 to be examined and compared with the 1641 taxation return and those resident at Easton in 1638 within the Able men listing (**Table 29**). By 1641 the volume of court matters being dealt with had dramatically declined from that in the early sixteenth century, although this was in line with national trends. A leet court was no longer held, and between 1641 and 1689, only fifteen manor courts were held, averaging out at one every three years. In 1641 eight men were listed as jurors and capital pledges, which reduced to seven in 1643. Nominally the courts recorded eleven separate names which in comparison to the population base figure of eleven men given in 1638 under the Able Men muster return, are comparable and confirmatory. The number of men listed as the homage, or customary tenants

<sup>808</sup> 'Vermuyden, Sir Cornelius (1590–1677), Drainage Engineer', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, accessed 26 July 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28226>.

<sup>809</sup> Suffolk Inquisition as to salt-marshes. 16 Chas II, 1664-1665, E178/6460, TNA.

<sup>810</sup> E. D. R. Burrell, 'An Historical Geography of the Sandlings of Suffolk, 1600 to 1850' (M.Sc., England, University of London, University College London (United Kingdom), 1961), 125–26.

<sup>811</sup> Suffolk Inquisition as to salt-marshes. 16 Chas II, 1664-1665, E178/6460, TNA.

<sup>812</sup> Court book, 1641-1689, 1309:17079/Gooch/4/365 (uncatalogued), SA.

required to attend, only numbered two for each court held between 1655 and 1689. A closer examination of the occupational status and place of abode, where known, for the eleven men listed in 1641-1643 reveals a distinct change to that recorded of just over a century before. In 1532, of the 23 men listed in the court, 44% were shown to have direct links with maritime pursuits through vessel ownership, bequests of fishing nets, acting as jurors or as merchants.<sup>813</sup> In 1641, only John Benefice, a merchant, can be shown to have a direct link with any maritime connections through his ownership of salt houses at Southwold. He also was listed in 1637-38 as a merchant financing a cargo of herring and sprats being brought from Kings Lynn to Dunwich in the Walberswick vessel *Erasmus*.<sup>814</sup>

In the early 1640s, the majority of the land remaining of the manor of Easton Bavents was held by this John Benefice, who lived at Southwold. In 1616, his father, Edward Benefice, had left bequests of five shillings each to the 'poore people of Easton' whom he named and are described as one old man and five widows.<sup>815</sup> John Benefice's son, another John, lived and died in Dunwich and after his death is described as 'gent', evidencing the rise of the Benefice family through the social ranks from fishermen to shipmasters to merchants and finally gentleman.<sup>816</sup> By the 1650s, John Pidgeon and Godfrey Ireland, both described as yeomen also moved out to Southwold, where they died. By 1674 only two larger houses with seven hearths between them remained although the physical condition of these properties is unknown. The remaining elderly, poor and distressed who were left at Easton occupied five other meagre houses. Thomas Manfrey, the occupant of a house with three hearths in 1674 is recorded in 1699 as renting the 'manor house' of Easton with 32 acres of land and pasture for the sum of £40.00 and whilst it is not explicit that this is the remaining demesne lands, compared with the total of just over 209 acres of demesne lands in c.1531, the land appears devastated.<sup>817</sup> By 1713 all that remained of the parish and community were two properties, one of which was a farm house, owned by John Sparham.<sup>818</sup>

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<sup>813</sup> See Table 14.

<sup>814</sup> Thank-you to Craig Lambert for this reference. Port of Yarmouth: Dunwich Official: Customer and Controller Coastal, 1637-38, E190/490/13, TNA.

<sup>815</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>816</sup> The land and property in Westleton and Dunwich left by John Benefice ultimately became part of the endowment of George Downing (Third Baronet) to Downing College, Cambridge. Conveyancing of divisions of Dunwich and Westleton estate, 1623-1709, GBR/0269/DCAR/1/1/1/2/3b, Downing College, Cambridge

<sup>817</sup> Survey, c.1431-1531; Suffolk Rentals, 1699, NRA 17140, Box 793, uncatalogued, BA.

<sup>818</sup> Probate inventory of John Sparham, 1713, FE1/8/85, SA.

### **The loss of St Nicholas, the chapel and the rise of nonconformity**

As discussed in Chapter 7, by c.1590, the church of St Nicholas had fallen into irreversible decay and the fabric itself may even have been destroyed through the erosion of the cliff where it had stood. Ecclesiastical visitations of the Diocese of Norwich, examining the conditions of parish churches and their congregations, are recorded as being undertaken between 1593 and 1633, although some of the records for the Suffolk archdeaconry have not survived or are too fragile to be consulted.<sup>819</sup> The surviving, available visitation records provide some information about Easton, and whilst not conclusive, when looked at in conjunction with other contemporary sources, do indicate the loss of St Nicholas and evidence that the community continued to worship from a chapel in the parish. The visitation of 1593 recorded that Easton was in sequestration, following the departure of the rector Henry Watkins, with Edward Benefice noted as churchwarden assisted by Thomas Betts and Lawrence Taylor.<sup>820</sup> In 1597, the visitation returns for Easton only mention that Robert Ide was a common swearer.<sup>821</sup> No mention at either visitation was made regarding any deficiencies with the fabric of the building or the furnishings and fittings, as was the case in 1597 at Covehithe, Blythburgh and Aldeburgh, whose churches and vicarages were in ruins: the implication being that St Nicholas was already lost.<sup>822</sup> A valuation was undertaken of all benefices in the Diocese of Norwich in 1598; Easton Bavents was listed with the addition of the term 'cappella' attached, indicating the congregation was operating from a chapel in the parish rather than a church.<sup>823</sup> With St Nicholas no longer being requested for burials within probate records, and parishioners recorded as being baptised, married and buried at Covehithe and South Cove from the 1590s and also at Southwold from 1602 (no parish registers survive pre 1602), all the circumstantial evidence points to the complete loss of St Nicholas.

In July 1602 a survey was undertaken within the Norwich diocese of all the 'Churches and Chancells which be ruined'.<sup>824</sup> Within the Dunwich deanery only Wissett and

<sup>819</sup> See the NRO online catalogue for fuller details, DN/VIS/2-7. <https://nrocatalogue.norfolk.gov.uk/diocese-of-norwich-visitations-processes>, accessed 29/5/2024.

<sup>820</sup> Consignation book, 1593, DN/VIS 2/2, NRO.

<sup>821</sup> The visitation of 1597 is the only Norwich Diocesan visitation to have been fully transcribed and published. J.F. Williams, ed., *Bishop Redman's Visitation 1597, Presentments in the Archdeaconries of Norwich, Norfolk and Suffolk*, vol. XVIII, Norfolk Record Society (Norwich: Norfolk Record Society, 1946), 128.

<sup>822</sup> Williams, XVIII:127, 129, 133.

<sup>823</sup> Valuation book, 1598, DN/VAL 1/3, NRO.

<sup>824</sup> List of churches ruined or decayed within the Archdeaconry of Suffolk, 1602, DN/MSC 1/24, NRO.

Bramfield are listed, with details of how long the chancels had been in such a condition. Easton was not listed, a further indication that it was not in the ruinous condition afflicting other churches in the deanery but had disappeared, most probably due to coastal erosion or flooding. Another document from the 1602 survey recorded the Norfolk parish of Weasenham St Peter with a ruinous church, however, the congregation here were using a barn for worship supplied by their patron whilst the church was undergoing repair.<sup>825</sup> This evidences that congregations were using substitute buildings for worship in extreme circumstances and it is feasible that the parishioners at Easton removed from St Nicholas into another building as it fell into disrepair or was lost to cliff erosion, either catastrophically or over a period of a few years. This would have allowed for the removal of some of the fixtures and fittings from the old parish church, such as the bell and font.<sup>826</sup> The visitation of 1606 for Easton recorded that 'Franncisce wife of John Birde, she did commit disturbance in the chapel by striving for a seate'.<sup>827</sup> Crucially, here the building is again described as a chapel (as it was in 1598) and not a church which would fit with the congregation having moved out of St Nicholas, although it was unlikely to be the building which had housed the chapel of St Margaret. This had been located near to the mere and haven, which by 1606 were flooded. Also relevant was the last recorded reference to this institution had occurred back in 1518, therefore the chapel of 1606 was some other building. The record of the visitation of 1633 is difficult to decipher although the churchwardens were being told to obtain 'Jewell's work', the *Apology of the Church of England* by John Jewell, Bishop of Salisbury, one of the required protestant texts every church was supposed to have.<sup>828</sup> There was also a requirement for 'the ways and manners...to be restored', an implication that diocesan officials were not satisfied with what was being preached, along with a request for bread to be distributed, either for the poor or for communion.<sup>829</sup>

In 1754 Gardner discussed the chapel of St Margaret's and stated that 'this chapel through age and by the diminution of the parishioners fell into irreparable decay, and

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<sup>825</sup> Transcript of roll among the Norwich Diocesan records of certificates of decayed churches in the Archdeaconry of Norwich, 1602, Col/13/168, NRO.

<sup>826</sup> It is recorded that the font which was placed in the Chapel of Ease at Lowestoft in 1699 came from Easton Bavents. Edmund Gillingwater, *An Historical Account of the Ancient Town of Lowestoft, in the County of Suffolk*. (Printed for G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1790), 336.

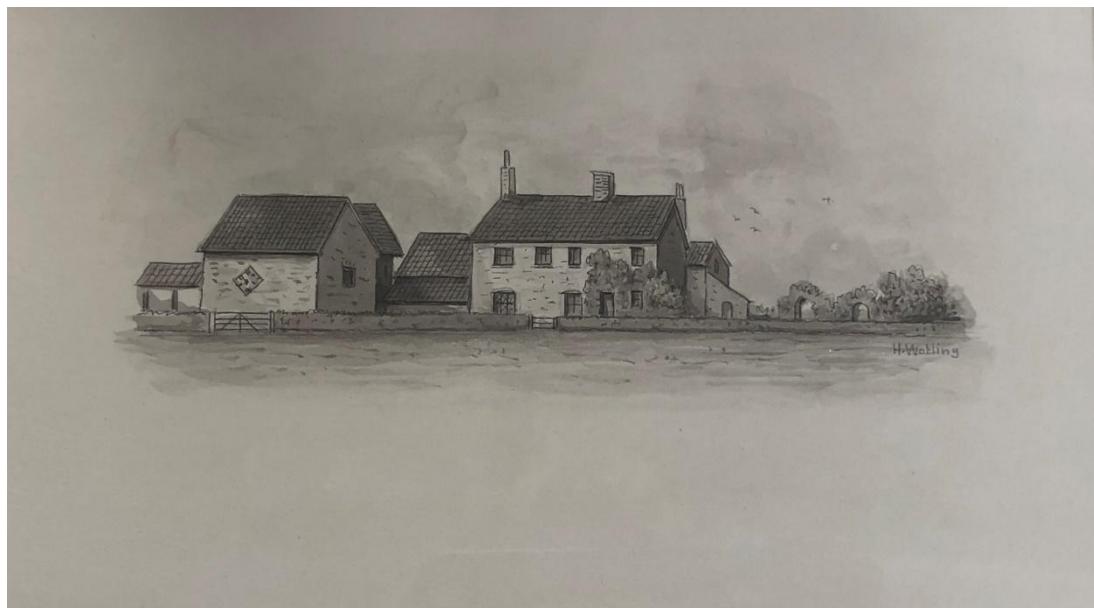
<sup>827</sup> Visitation book, Archdeaconry Suffolk, 1606, DN/VIS/4/2/2, NRO.

<sup>828</sup> Dymond, *The Business of the Suffolk Parish 1558-1625*, 37.

<sup>829</sup> Thank-you to Viv Aldous for providing the transcription of this entry. The interpretation of the text is the writers. Visitation Book, Archdeaconry of Suffolk, 1633, DN/VIS/6/4, NRO.

was converted into a barn, whereof but one or two stones remain'; a service of thanksgiving had been held in the ruins in 1749.<sup>830</sup> It is stated here that instead of converting the chapel into a barn, the chapel at Easton from c.1598 was actually a barn converted for religious services, its origin mis-represented in oral retelling. Gardner goes on to recall that 'some people now living report that their parents told them that they remembered the chapel in a ruinous condition with one bell, some painting...but no performance of divine worship.<sup>831</sup> There were only two properties remaining in the original parish of Easton in 1747 and one of those became known as Plant's Farm House.<sup>832</sup> Hamlet Watling sketched this farmhouse and its outbuildings in 1841, when he lived close-by at Wrentham, and ruined walls are clearly visible to the right-side of the house: this could be the ruined barn-turned-chapel described in 1754 (Figure 28).

Figure 28 – Image of Plant's farmhouse by Hamlet Watling, 1841



Source – SOWD 1980:39, Southwold Museum.

North-east Suffolk was an area of emergent nonconformity from the start of the seventeenth century and these congregations are known to have used converted buildings such as barns, houses or disused ecclesiastical buildings as places of

<sup>830</sup> Gardner, *An Historical Account of Dunwich*, 259.

<sup>831</sup> Gardner, 260.

<sup>832</sup> In March 1747 the Rectory of Easton Bavents was consolidated with the Rectory of Benacre and it is stated in the Consolidation Instrument that at that date the parish only contained two houses. Copy Consolidation Instrument, 1747, 110/D1/1, SA. By 1839 it was the only remaining property within the parish. Wake, *Southwold and Its Vicinity Ancient and Modern*, 306.

worship.<sup>833</sup> Between 1600 and 1640 only seven full wills were proven by Easton parishioners, making it difficult to fully understand the strength of religious beliefs within the parish at the start of the seventeenth century.<sup>834</sup> As noted by Spufford, caution must be exercised in using the preambles of wills when determining religious beliefs due to the influence of those scribes who actually wrote the wills at the bequest of the testator.<sup>835</sup> Applying Spufford's examples of Catholic as opposed to puritan or Calvinistic preambles to the seven wills as noted above, four display Calvinistic and puritanical preambles, two are so short they are inconclusive and one, Edward Benefice's, displays a complex mix of both Catholic and Protestant wording. Benefice was a senior member of an established family within the community and had held important positions including that of churchwarden, capital pledge for the manorial court and in 1598 was listed as one of only two tax payers at Easton rich enough to be assessed on the value of their goods.<sup>836</sup> His preamble, which ran to fourteen lines of text, started with the Protestant emphasis of decreeing his spirit to god whilst extoling the death of his only son Jesus Christ as the means for his salvation but then asked that his soul is placed in the company of the heavenly angels and blessed saints, a definite reference to the 'old' religion. Benefice's will illustrated how the acceptance of the Elizabethan protestant faith and the more overtly Calvinistic views held by James I were slow to be accepted. The latter four wills, echoing Calvinistic overtones appear more in tune with the choice of clergy instituted at Easton. They too can be shown to have held such beliefs, and ultimately in the 1630s, emerging nonconformists appear to use the chapel, with or without the agreement of the parishioners.

At the 1597 visitation, the Southwold rector Robert Selby, who was to take over the incumbency of Easton in 1607, was accused of various misdemeanours. He did not

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<sup>833</sup> Christopher Stell, 'Nonconformist Chapels In East Anglia', in *Religious Dissent In East Anglia*, The Proceedings of the Second Symposium on the History of Religious Dissent in East Anglia (Norwich: The Centre of East Anglian Studies, 1993), 12; Dymond and Martin, *Historical Atlas Suffolk*, 90.

<sup>834</sup> Larne, 1608, Betts, 1610, Benefice, 1616, Jallop, 1625, Musfor, 1630, Gellence, 1636, Haunce, 1639, Appendix 1.

<sup>835</sup> Margaret Spufford, 'Religious Preambles and Scribes', in *When Death Do Us Part, Understanding and Interpreting The Probate Records of Early Modern England*, A Local Population Studies Supplement (Oxford: Leopard's Head Press, 2000), 144–57.

<sup>836</sup> Edward Benefice and Laurence Taylor are named as churchwardens receiving money due from tithe accounts which have survived from a period of sequestration at Easton, 1593–1597 or 1601–1603. These accounts are dated c1601–1603 but could be from the earlier period of sequestration. Thomas Evans, instituted in 1597 is last recorded 1601 by Venn and Laurence Tayler died of plague in Feb 1603. 'ACAD, A Cambridge Alumni Database'; Sequestration accounts, DN/SEQ7/1, NRO; Court Book, 1605–1610, SC2/203/93, TNA; Lay Subsidy, 1598, E179/182/427, rot. 4, TNA.

usually wear the surplice, he did not read the Homilies, he did not teach the youth and he did not read the injunctions quarterly.<sup>837</sup> Selby has been identified as a Calvinist preacher with strong Puritan links and part of the emerging nonconformist element.<sup>838</sup> In May 1605, John Maplesden, the archdeacon of Suffolk (1575-1613) wrote to Sir Nathaniel Bacon at his lodging in Norwich, as at this date Bacon had control of the manor of Easton Bavents and was its patron. Maplesden was extolling the virtues of Robert Selby whom he described as 'a very sufficient man to discharge both learning and discretion, a master of artes of 12 yeres and hath preached in the university, at the common place of Norwich and at our seane at Ypswich with special liking'.<sup>839</sup> Maplesden requested that Bacon gave Selby the incumbency of Easton, which he described as 'a parish eaten up with the sea'. Selby was recorded at Easton in the 1606 visitation preaching the scriptures, but his official institution did not take place until 1607.<sup>840</sup> Selby had also appeared as a witness to the will of Richard Larne, 1603, whose preamble reflected Calvinistic leanings. Bacon was a godly Protestant, known for recommending Puritan ministers to parishes and consequently 'prophesying' flourished in these locations.<sup>841</sup>

Robert Selby died in 1611 and later that year the bailiffs of Southwold wrote again to Sir Nathaniel Bacon to inform him that 'Mr Selbie our minister is deceased' and 'we entreat your worship to be so friendlie unto us and to the rest of our neyours in our towne as to bestowe the gifte of Easton benefice... unto such a preacher whom we shall send to be an humble suiter for the same'.<sup>842</sup> Samuel Garey had been instituted to the living at Easton in November 1608, the year after Selby's institution, which would suggest that Selby had allowed Garey to take over the living, although it is doubtful that he actually lived there as he was also instituted at Denver in Norfolk at the same time and he does not appear within any capacity within the wills of the

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<sup>837</sup> Williams, *Bishop Redman's Visitation* 1597, XVIII:131.

<sup>838</sup> Notes of emigration compiled by Alan F. Bottomley, 841/7/17/6, n.d., SA. Dymond and Martin, *Historical Atlas Suffolk*, 90.

<sup>839</sup> Norwich had a place of open-air worship established by the puritan city fathers which offered more radical worship. The seane was a similar place at Ipswich. Morgan, Key, and Taylor, *Bacon Papers 1603-1607*, 182, see fns. 514, 515, 516.

<sup>840</sup> Visitation book, Archdeaconry Suffolk, 1606, DN/VIS/4/2/2, NRO; DNIR, Jegon, DN/Reg 15 bk 21 - f.38, NRO.

<sup>841</sup> 'Bacon, Nathaniel (1546-1622), of Stiffkey'.

<sup>842</sup> Bailiffs of Southwold to Sir Nathaniel Bacon at Stewkey, 6 Sep 1611, Folger L.d. 760, <https://www.folger.edu/research/online-resources/> accessed 25/05/2024. G. Alan Metters et al., eds., *The Papers of Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey, Volume VI, 1608-1613*, Norfolk Record Society, LXXXI (Norfolk Record Society, 2017), 239.

Easton parishioners.<sup>843</sup> Garey himself had written, unsuccessfully, to the Earl of Salisbury in July 1608 begging him to accept him into his service, also detailing his poverty, but mentioning the favours he had received from the deceased Lord Cromwell to whom he had been chaplain as way of references.<sup>844</sup> What is clear is that he made himself known again at Easton in November 1611, as a letter received by Dorothy Bacon (wife of Sir Nathaniel Bacon) from a Thomas Pearce, writing at Walberswick, informs her Mr Carie (sic) has 'claimeth the right of Easton'. Pearce had been suggested for the appointment by Dorothy Bacon, potentially against her husband's wishes, and felt aggrieved that Garey had reasserted his right to the incumbency.<sup>845</sup> Garey held Calvinistic beliefs that Popery was a threat to civil liberties and expressed these views along with other Protestant themes as a preacher at Norwich and publisher of five sermons and tracts between 1605 and 1623.<sup>846</sup> Southwold at this time was emerging as a centre of Congregationalist worship and the family of the minister who followed Robert Selby, John Youngs, took part in the 'Great Migration' of the 1630s and 40s to New England and founded a Congregational church at Southold, Long Island.<sup>847</sup> Between 1635 and 1640, in a five-mile radius of Southwold four ministers and thirty people emigrated to America, including men and women from Covehithe, Reydon, South Cove, Walberswick and Wrentham.<sup>848</sup>

Earlier, between 1622 and 1638, the evidence indicates that outsiders were using the chapel at Easton for their own purposes. The number of parishioners was low, around 39 in 1638, yet twelve couples applied for marriage licences between 1622 and 1638

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<sup>843</sup> See Appendix 8.

<sup>844</sup> "Cecil Papers: 1612", in *Calendar of the Cecil Papers in Hatfield House: Volume 24, Addenda, 1605-1668*, (London, 1976) 210-229. *British History Online*, accessed May 29, 2024, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-cecil-papers/vol24/pp210-229>.

<sup>845</sup> Dorothy Bacon expressed various concerns in her letters re the appointment of Puritan ministers. Key, 'Letters of Dorothy Bacon', 81; Metters et al., *Bacon Papers, 1608-1613*, 244.

<sup>846</sup> Kingston Farai Nyamapfene, 'Images Of Godly Magistracy In Early Stuart England' (M.Phil, Birmingham, University of Birmingham, 2012), 52.

<sup>847</sup> Roger Thompson, *Mobility and Migration, East Anglian Founders of New England 1629-1640* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), xii , see also, Notes of emigration compiled by Alan F. Bottomley, 841/7/17/6, n.d., SA.

<sup>848</sup> For further discussion on this period of emigration see; Thompson, *Mobility and Migration, East Anglian Founders of New England 1629-1640*; N.C.P. Tyack, 'Migration From East Anglia To New England Before 1660' (PhD, London, London School of Economics and Political Science, 1951); Lists of known emigrants can also be found in; C. B. Jewson, *Transcript of Three Registers of Passengers from Great Yarmouth to Holland and New England, 1637 to 1639*, Norfolk Record Society 25 (Norwich: Norfolk Record Society, 1954).

to marry in the chapel at Easton.<sup>849</sup> This figure far outstrips the anticipated frequency for such a small population. Nineteen of the men and women listed on the licences lived elsewhere in Suffolk with five of the parties stating they lived in Easton but were 'late' of elsewhere. Fourteen said they were from Southwold, three from Reydon, two each from Laxfield and Wenham and one each from Walberswick, Yaxley and Lowestoft. Couples chose to apply for licences outside their parish of abode for various reasons, including differing religious views, and the emerging nonconformity in the area is given here as the reason these couples applied for licences to marry at the chapel at Easton.<sup>850</sup> No records detailing nonconformist marriages in the area survive from this date therefore it is impossible to say with complete certainty. Research into known emigrants to New England for nonconformist religious beliefs also has not provided any definite nominal matches although more unusual surnames such as Bradstreet and Sewell (both names given within the marriage licences) could be found. It is recognised that surviving records for this migration are not conclusive and the English origins of only 31% of immigrants to New England between 1620 and 1650 have been uncovered.<sup>851</sup> Between 1629 and 1640, emigrants were recorded coming from Laxfield, Wenham and Lowestoft, as well as from Southwold and its near neighbours, parishes where the couples applying for marriage licences originated from.<sup>852</sup> Further research into the lives of the fourteen parties is outside the scope of this work. What is clearly evident is that these couples, mainly from Southwold, wished to marry at Easton Bawds in preference to their own parish church/churches and that the bailiffs of Southwold were trying to direct the appointment of the clergy at Easton Bawds. By 1659 a group of Independent believers was known to be at Southwold and a licence was granted in 1672 for a place of nonconformist worship.<sup>853</sup> Whilst there is no conclusive evidence as to why the events described above were happening, differing religious beliefs was a feasible possibility with the conclusion that Easton chapel was being used as a place of worship for the emergent Southwold nonconformists.

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<sup>849</sup> Between 1622-1623, 4; 1628, 2; 1633, 1; 1637-1638, 5 licences were applied for, see; Frederick Arthur Crisp, ed., *Marriage Licences from the Official Note Books of the Archdeaconry of Suffolk Deposited at the Ipswich Probate Court 1613-1674* (London: Private Press of Frederick Arthur Crisp, 1903) The original Act Books were consulted to confirm the entries. Act Books, including marriage licence business, 1610-48, IC/AA6/22 - 28, SA.

<sup>850</sup> For further information on the issue of licences see, 'Marriage Allegations, Bonds and Licences in England and Wales', FamilySearch, accessed 7 June 2024, [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Marriage\\_Allegations,\\_Bonds\\_and\\_Licences\\_in\\_England\\_and\\_Wales](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Marriage_Allegations,_Bonds_and_Licences_in_England_and_Wales).

<sup>851</sup> Thompson, *Mobility and Migration, East Anglian Founders of New England 1629-1640*, 181.

<sup>852</sup> Thompson, *Mobility and Migration, East Anglian Founders of New England 1629-1640*.

<sup>853</sup> Dymond and Martin, *Historical Atlas Suffolk*, 90.

Between the institution to the living at Easton of Samuel Garey in 1608 and the last recorded institution of Richard Lewthwait in 1666, two further rectors can be linked to the living.<sup>854</sup> Philip Seaman was active in the parish in the 1630s when he acted as witness to two wills. Thomas West, under the patronage of Jeffrey Howland, was accused in an inquisition of 1650, to determine the union or division of parishes during the Commonwealth 1649-1660, of being the incumbent of a sinecure. A sinecure was a benefice literally 'without the care of souls', one which required no input or work to receive payment. It stated that 'he recieveth the proffitts but hath not preached there these four years there being neither church nor chapel within the parish'.<sup>855</sup> This confirms that at some point between 1638 and 1646 the chapel at Easton ceased to exist, either through the complete loss of the building to erosion or more feasibly through lack of use and its return to a barn or outbuilding, ultimately becoming derelict by 1754.

## Conclusion

The community of Easton at the start of the seventeenth century was experiencing serious decline, which continued apace throughout the century. Physical changes to the landscape were occurring as a direct result of erosion, accretion and flooding, although trying to arrive at a valid calculation of the area or acreage of the land affected by such changes during this period has not been possible due to the lack of surviving data. The destruction of the haven and the parish church by the end of the sixteenth century meant there was little incentive for outsiders to settle in Easton and even provided reasons for the young and ambitious to leave. Epidemic disease in the early seventeenth century wiped out a large swathe of the inhabitants who had chosen to stay, most certainly the old, sick and poor. A handful of families remained living and working in the parish throughout the first half of the 1600s but they too either died out or left by the time of the Hearth Tax in 1674. Southwold during this period had grown both its population and its economy as befitting a port and town with borough status, and it served as a magnet to the wealthier, aspirational members of Easton. Southwold too would start to experience a period of decline following a devastating fire in the town in 1659 and the contraction of its maritime fishing, but it still offered more opportunities for a livelihood and profit than Easton. There are no

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<sup>854</sup> See Appendix 8.

<sup>855</sup> Suffolk Inquisition, COMM/12A/15 – Salisbury, 1647-1657, f.560-561, Lambeth Palace Library

traces of a maritime presence nor coastal fishing community at Easton during the seventeenth century nor any evidence that the remaining inhabitants contributed to maritime enterprises still operating from neighbouring Southwold. One is left with a sense of abandonment of both people and place.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Conclusion**

This final concluding chapter will reflect on the research questions raised at the start of the thesis, discuss the extent to which they have been answered, and understand how the associated aims and objectives of the chapter themes have been addressed. The importance of these findings within the wider academic field will be assessed and the strength of the contribution of the thesis discussed, as well as identifying any limitations. Ideas and questions for further research will be supplied at the end.

The two interlinked, overarching aims of this thesis were to reconstruct a maritime community during the late medieval and early modern periods, and to identify any correlations between its fortunes and the perennial issue of dynamic, coastal change. No previous micro-focused study had been conducted on such a community located on the eroding east coast of Suffolk, and as such this omission has been addressed with this work on Easton Bavents. The problem with attempting to reconstruct rural communities lost to the sea is that physical evidence and often documentary evidence has not survived. The corpus of material identified through diligent research and explored here for Easton Bavents has allowed the underlying initial research questions to be answered. These questions related to the fortunes of the maritime community over time, to understanding the depth of its economic dependence on fishing, determining the changing nature of social relationships within the community, and their interlinkages with the effects of coastal erosion. As a result, it has been possible to chart the growth and decline in the community at Easton and to plot effectively the sequence of dynamic coastal change.

Within the thesis the overarching aims were explored through five principal research themes which formed the basis of the five main chapters and reflected the chief primary sources of evidence. The themes were: defining the historical topography and coastal morphology allied with the extent and rate of coastal changes; demographic changes and economic wealth; tenurial evidence and landholdings; relevant aspects of the maritime community; and, finally, a reconstitution of elements of the community and its inhabitants.

Maps, charts and written navigational aids were the main sources for understanding the historical topography and coastal morphology at Easton Bavents. The importance of provenance and the background to the creation of each was a vital element of this aspect of research and as a result the succession of changes have been reconstructed with a reasonable degree of reliability. The stretch of coastline under discussion is highly unstable with complex interactions between phases of accretion, erosion and flooding which have led to both positive and negative outcomes for the associated communities. In the early medieval period the silting of the Easton river estuary, to the north of the parish and the promontory of Easton Ness, was associated with the existence of a shallow mere capable of accommodating small boats. By the fourteenth century a haven existed which was capable of providing safe anchorage for larger vessels. Between the 1280s and the 1450s, during the Great Transition and a period of dramatic realignment of the global climate, the rate of topographical change along the Suffolk coast accelerated significantly, resulting in the formation of a haven lying between Easton and Northales which provided economic opportunities for both communities. By the middle of the sixteenth century, however, these same dynamic forces were presenting the community at Easton with severe challenges. The main driver for this scenario was the movement of the Barnard sandbank, which had lain offshore protecting Easton Ness for at least four hundred years, but which maps show had moved northwards by the late sixteenth century. The sandy promontory was now exposed to the full force of wave action and the inevitable result was the rapid erosion of the southerly cliffs, associated accretion in the haven area and increased vulnerability to the flooding of low-lying land. The coastline at Easton was continuing its path of constant change which had been occurring for many millennia. The associated economic decline and exodus of the population reached a crisis point for those remaining after repeated plague outbreaks at the start of the seventeenth century. With the continued erosion of land there was no incentive for the owners of the remaining land to attempt any reclamation or improvement schemes to stem the losses.

Having mapped out the chronology of the coastal changes at Easton, an investigation of the changes in demography and economic wealth was undertaken to see if there was any correlation. This was achieved through the investigation and extrapolation of data from a variety of listings and taxation returns which provided a proxy for population size and wealth structure. Between 1066 and 1327 Easton witnessed a significant rise in population and a modest rise in its wealth, exceeding national trends. Then during the period 1327-1524, and contrary to national and local trends,

Easton continued to experience an increase in its population and a dramatic rise in its taxation wealth to reach a zenith in both. Both the population and wealth drastically declined during the last half of the sixteenth century, until by 1680 only a handful of inhabitants remained. The timing and duration of the rise and then subsequent decline of Easton's population and economy correspond with the known phases of positive and negative coastal change. This research also revealed an influx of alien immigrants during the period c.1440-c.1524, many from Brabant and Zeeland, which warranted further investigation. These outsiders originally had trading links with the Suffolk coast, but they began to settle at Easton as its haven became more accommodating to larger vessels and as they seized opportunities for fishing and trade. These aliens subsequently proved to be a pivotal factor within the community at Easton as contributors to its economic wealth. Examples of affinal links between the immigrants and local women were identified and strong consanguineal ties developed as a consequence of the tendency for the aliens to settle and stay within the community. Testamentary evidence from the community demonstrated that during the buoyant years of the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries the wealth of the aliens, other English incomers, and the original inhabitants was also devised along consanguineal lines but spread wider into 'shared experience' kinship links of the maritime community of Easton and its near neighbours. There were underlying petty tensions within the community, as witnessed within the manorial estreats, and more complex economic tensions, as witnessed by the range of litigation within the Common Plea and Chancery courts. Nonetheless, overall, a picture of a community with strong working relationship ties built on their shared experiences and a desire for common goals emerged. The evidence of the relationship strands changed as the economic boom passed and decline set in over the period c.1580-c.1680. Research revealed no sense of a community with 'shared experience' kinship ties at this time. The quantity of testamentary evidence reduced during this period, but it indicated that wealth was still being shared along affinal and consanguineal lines. However, as family members moved out of the parish to seek work or land elsewhere, the sense of any relationships or ties disappeared within the few who remained.

The third research theme was the investigation of the manorial structure and its documentary base. The discussion of the variant manorial administrations, evident throughout the period of study provided examples of the economic forces at play and highlighted periods of enterprise as exemplified by John Hopton. At the start of the research, a great deal was expected from the discovery of an uncatalogued manorial survey, initially dated to 1531, which it was anticipated would provide a rich source of

topographical detail and information about agriculture and social structure at a pivotal point in the history of the community. However, a proposed full reconstruction of the manor at the date of the survey was impossible due to the surveys mix of copied data from the 1430s and its incomplete state. Yet it still provided details such as conclusive proof of the existence of the haven between Easton and Covehithe and it provided a sense of the relative locations of key elements of the lost topography of the settlement such as the approximate positions of the church, chapel, manor and mere.

The fourth research theme drew upon primary and published port and customs records and included personal wills testimonies, and official ship censuses and listings to reconstruct the economic activities and, especially, the differing maritime enterprises of Easton Bavents. The community experienced first a rise and then a decline in its economic status between c.1450 and c.1680, although its rise in the fifteenth century - a period of severe economic decline – was a surprising discovery. This economic boom was the result of several contributory factors which had coalesced to underpin the various maritime enterprises carried out from Easton. These included not only off-shore local fishing but extended to coastal trading, profits from state requisitioning of vessels, and both trading and longer haul fishing voyages to Iceland and trading via London, Calais and the Low Countries. During the same period, there was some dependence on agriculture on the light sandy soils, including rearing sheep and rabbits, with surpluses being traded. However, as the maritime economy dwindled during the second half of the sixteenth century, the reliance of the drastically reduced population on husbandry increased, until it too became unviable due to the loss of land through flooding and erosion. The inhabitants of Easton Bavents, at its zenith, were not 'farmers who fished', but they were trading and fishing mariners who farmed when required.

The fifth, and final, research theme was to reconstitute the ecclesiastical institutions, clergy, laity and religious life of Easton Bavents through an examination of diocesan records and personal will testimonies. From this reconstitution a sense of parish life emerged which also served to highlight the special bonds existing within the maritime community. A separate chapel, dedicated to St Margaret, was established in the vicinity of the emergent community at the haven, allowing easier access for worshippers resident in the bustling maritime settlement around the market, whilst the more distant parish church of St Nicholas – sited to the centre of the original parish - was refurbished with bequests from all the strands of society within Easton. The chapel became the focus of pilgrimages due to its associations with locally held relics of St Margaret and the fifteenth-century poet Osbern Bokenham. A guild founded in

c.1456 and dedicated to St Mary provided social and economic resources for the mariners and was probably a socially binding force in the community as the sole guild in the parish. Linkages emerged c.1450-c.1480, of a group of educated, forward thinking clergy within Easton and its locale. Providing education for the sons of the wealthier inhabitants, they also left evidence of interests in the newly emerging science of navigation, beneficial to the emerging shipmen and other mariners at Easton who were venturing into further waters. Finally, this research dated the loss of the parish church of St Nicholas to the period c.1590-1598, earlier than previously assumed, and revealed that after its demise the remaining congregation worshipped in a converted barn building. This was renamed as a chapel, and by the 1630s this was also being used by early non-conformists from the local area.

There are two important strands of research findings which deserve to be highlighted, and which have not previously been discussed or identified within academic study. Firstly, the evidence of a remarkable rise in economic and demographic fortunes, in the mid to late fifteenth century, a period of renown recession, decline and decay. Yet this was a period when, based on varied maritime enterprises, aspects of Easton life – the presence of beer brewers and unruly alehouses and incomers from London and elsewhere owning manorial property – had a strong urban feel. Secondly, and related to this, was the concentrated presence of alien immigrants on the north-eastern coastline of Suffolk. Their overall presence in the area had previously been briefly acknowledged by Ormrod and Kowaleski and their concentration in the smaller ports of Southwold and Walberswick touched upon. However, the particular demographic of settled, entrepreneurial men and their assimilation into the community at Easton Bavents has not been recognised or highlighted. Significantly, this research opens up wider issues relating to the combined economic importance of the smaller ports of the east coast during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, an area which has not attracted previous in-depth research. The micro-focused approach of this thesis has succeeded in its highlighting the unique qualitative minutiae of one community which in a wider based, more quantitative study would have gone unrecorded.

The study is unique in its approach to reconstructing the topography of a rural landscape lost to the sea and its community. With no surviving land mass or features allowing archaeological research nor any analysis of historical ecology, the topographical reconstruction was achieved through detailed research into a combination of a wide breadth of primary archival and written secondary sources which had not previously been utilised. Similarly, standard archival sources used in the study of demographic reconstitution, such as parish registers, were not extant for

Easton Bavents. As a qualified archivist, the author has been able to bring applicable work-based experience to post graduate research which resulted in the identification of a wide breadth of rich primary and secondary source material to be ultimately identified. It is possible that the corpus of archives identified for Easton is unparalleled for an English parish lost to coastal changes. These archival research techniques and strategies can be taken and applied across the wider academic fields of demographic and topographic studies where the identification of relevant primary and secondary archival material is challenging.

During the research phase of this thesis, limitations emerged both in the quality of the extant archival sources and in the ability of the author to exploit them fully. As noted earlier, the manorial survey was impossible to date, and it was incomplete. This impacted on the ability to produce a comprehensive reconstruction of the physical layout of the community, which it had hoped would be an intrinsic part of the final research. The quantity of research into the medieval manorial court records of the manor of Easton Bavents was curtailed by the basic Latin to English translation level expertise of the author, who had initially seen the PhD as a means of improving this skill. The transcription and translation of the manorial survey took far longer than anticipated and therefore a decision was made to only sample certain pertinent court material rather than attempt long runs of court translations allowing time to be diverted to other research material which would yield further data.

At the outset of the research, it was anticipated that GIS would be used in the presentation of the map and chart data. Unfortunately, due to Covid 19 and being prevented from studying in person the techniques required, the author was not able to develop sufficient skills to allow this to happen. This has limited the ability to overlay data relating to erosion loss and accretion and provide a more visual representation of the timelines involved.

### **Questions for further research**

There are various strands of research, identified within this thesis which merit being taken further in an attempt to understand if Easton's maritime economic boom of the late fifteenth century was unique within the smaller ports of the east coast. This boom was underpinned by the London to Calais wool trade between c.1480 and c.1520, the Icelandic trade in 1490-1530, an influx of immigrants, mainly from the Low Countries, and close working and community ties. Further study focusing on these issues could be applied across a wider geographical area (North Norfolk down to Walton in Essex)

and include both small and larger ports. By taking more of a 'big history', quantitative approach to the research, as exemplified by the 'Maritime Kent' project, led by Professor Craig Lambert in collaboration with Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh, it would feed into the growing knowledge base of England's emergence as a global trading nation and maritime power.<sup>856</sup>

Similarly, the importance of the influence of the alien immigrants, both demographically and economically, on the east coast Suffolk ports warrants further research. With the subtly differing demographic to that witnessed at Easton, the experiences of those at Dunwich, Southwold, Walberswick and Woodbridge (and potentially those in similar Norfolk hot-spots) may highlight similarities and differences. An understanding of the longevity of their stays and the extent of their assimilation into their adopted community, through an exploration of probate, testamentary and parish records, would provide further valuable insights.

This thesis stated in Chapter 1 that it was not attempting to understand or apply any contemporary scientific, geographical approaches to coastal erosion nor any physical solutions to the problem. Nevertheless, the thesis has demonstrated that complex, non-linear coastal changes and interlinked erosion, accretion and flooding are an integral element of this stretch of the coastline, with varying positive and negative effects for the community of Easton over a period of nearly 700 years. Coastal erosion is usually depicted negatively, but the history of Easton provides a reminder that it also provided opportunities which flexible and adaptable communities have seized. For communities currently affected negatively by such forces and experiencing the same economic and personal disasters as witnessed at Easton, their historical 'story' can be utilised through projects such as Risky Cities.<sup>857</sup> Here, histories of repeated flooding at Hull have been used in innovative ways to aid the current community with their flood resilience. Elements of Easton's experiences, including understanding that it has also involved positive responses to the dynamic coastal changes, could help those communities currently dealing with the distressing loss of their homes and land. The research should also be utilised by the Environment Agency in their forward Shoreline Management Plans (SMP) especially to aid the questions of intervention, holding the line or managing realignment.<sup>858</sup> The micro-focused approach to the study

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<sup>856</sup> 'Maritime Kent, c.1450-c.1650', University of Southampton, accessed 7 August 2024, <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/research/projects/maritime-kent-c1450-c1650>.

<sup>857</sup> 'Risky Cities, Living with Water in an Uncertain Future Climate'.

<sup>858</sup> 'Shoreline Management Plans', Environment Agency, accessed 7 August 2024, <https://environment.data.gov.uk/shoreline-planning>.

of the coastline in the Easton Bavents area, developed within this thesis, could be applied to other stretches of endangered coastlines.

**Appendix 1 – Extant wills and administrations for testators given of  
Easton Bavents, 1376-1672 (including Table 30)**

Name and title/occupation given	Year of probate	Probate ref	Latin/English and transcription information
Mildenhall, William, rector	1376 – PW	<i>Heydon</i> 133, 134, NCC, NRO	L - PN
Brightelm, Roger	1392 – PW	<i>Harsyk</i> 173, NCC, NRO	Illegible
Cossyn, Richard, Knight	1392 – PW	<i>Harsyk</i> 172, NCC, NRO	L - PN
Sweteman, Thomas	1425 – A	<i>Hirning</i> 17 (28), NCC, NRO	
Wade/Wace, John	1427 – A	<i>Hirning</i> 23, NCC, NRO	
Lumpe, Maude	1437 – A	<i>Doke</i> 3, NCC, NRO	
Myllere, Baldwin	1437 – A	<i>Doke</i> 3, NCC, NRO	
Byrd, Andrew	1438 – A	<i>Doke</i> 4, NCC, NRO	L
Godman, Nicholas	1440 – A	<i>Doke</i> 10, NCC, NRO	
Helm, John	1444 – PW	<i>IC/AA2/1/9</i> , SAC, SA	L - PN
Wolleman, Katherine	1446 – PW	<i>IC/AA2/1/58</i> , SAC, SA	L - PN
Clubbard, Richard	1447 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/1/59</i> , SAC, SA	L - PN
Mylde alias Cowpere, John	1451 - PW (N)	<i>IC/AA2/1/143</i> , SAC, SA	L - PN
Bocher, Agnes	1452 - A	<i>Aleyn</i> 12, NCC, NRO	L
Clubbard, Henry	1452 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/1/173</i> , SAC, SA	L - PN
Crowe, Margaret	1452 - A	<i>Aleyn</i> 12, NCC, NRO	L
Cook, John	1453 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/1/146</i> , SAC, SA	L - PN
Cok, Edmund	1455 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/1/115</i> , SAC, SA	L - PN
Bryggs, Robert	1456 - PW	<i>Neve</i> 3, NCC, NRO	L - PN
Cook, John	1456 - A	<i>Brosyard</i> 2, NCC, NRO	L
Cook/e, John, junior, at Portsmouth	1456 - A	<i>Neve</i> 21, NCC, NRO	L & E – precis
Melle, Catherine	1456 - PW	<i>Neve</i> 64, NCC, NRO	L - PN
Wymond, Joan	1456 - PW	<i>Neve</i> 64, NCC, NRO	L - PN
Sparhawke, Robert	1457 - PW	<i>Neve</i> 54, NCC, NRO	L - PN
Dene, John	1459 - A	<i>Brosyard</i> 16, NCC, NRO	L
Cade, Robert	1462 - A	<i>Brosyard</i> 22, NCC, NRO	L
Moyse, Geoffrey	1462 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/2/67</i> , SAC, SA	L - PN
Parle, John	1462 - A	<i>Brosyard</i> 24, NCC, NRO	L
Sewale, John	1463 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/2/105</i> , SAC, SA	L - PN
Wellys, Margery	1463 - A	<i>Jekkys</i> 4, NCC, NRO	L
Den, John	1464 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/2/122</i> , SAC, SA	L - PN
Sperhauk, Robert	1464 - A	<i>Jekkys</i> 7, NCC, NRO	L
Coleyn, John	1465 - A	<i>Jekkys</i> 9, NCC, NRO	L
Cook/e, Simon	1465 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/2/161</i> , SAC, SA	L - precis
Notyngham, Katherine	1465 – PW	<i>IC/AA2/2/128 &amp; 133</i> , SAC, SA	L & E - PN, precis
Thomas, Philip	1465 - A	<i>Jekkys</i> 9, NRO	L

Cherye, Alice	1471 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/2/214, SAC, SA</i>	L - PN
Childerhouse, Thomas	1471 - A	<i>Jekkys 31, NCC, NRO</i>	L
Johnson, William	1471 - A	<i>Jekkys 35, NCC, NRO</i>	L
Childerows, John	1472 - PW	<i>Gilberd 11, NCC, NRO</i>	Not found on microfilm
Sewall, Ann	1472 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/2/244, SAC, SA</i>	L - illegible
Styroppe, Richard	1472 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/2/260, SAC, SA</i>	L - precis
Johnson, Margaret	1473 - A	<i>Gelour 1, NCC, NRO</i>	A
Barker, Henry	1473 - PW	<i>Hubert 5, NCC, NRO</i>	L - precis
Bokenlond (Bokenham), Agnes, widow	1473 - A	<i>Hubert 27, NCC, NRO</i>	L
Bryggys, Agnes	1473 - PW	<i>Gilberd 41, NCC, NRO</i>	L - very faint
Chylderows, John, senior	1473 - PW	<i>Gilberd 12, NCC, NRO</i>	L - precis
Cook/e, John, senior	1473 - PW	<i>Hubert 38, 39, NCC, NRO</i>	L - PN
Duffield, John	1473 - A	<i>Hubert 27, NCC, NRO</i>	L
Assy, Margerie, widow	1474 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/2/267, SAC, SA</i>	L - precis
Barker, Margaret	1474 - PW	<i>Hubert 45, NCC, NRO</i>	L - precis
Gardener, John	1474 - PW	<i>Hubert 44, NCC, NRO</i>	L - precis
Lacebon, Thomas	1474 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/2/277, SAC, SA</i>	L - precis
Carlewyne, James	1475 - A	<i>Gelour 10, NCC, NRO</i>	L
Childerhouse, Richard	1475 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/2/268, SAC, SA</i>	L - precis
Helm, Thomas	1475 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/2/305, SAC, SA</i>	L - precis
Crede, Alicia	1476 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/2/320, SAC, SA</i>	L - precis
Sayendum, Edmund	1477 - A	<i>Gelour 16, NCC, NRO</i>	L
Smyth, William	1479 - PW	<i>Caston 3A, NCC, NRO</i>	L - precis
Perker, John	1480 - A	<i>Hubert 88, NCC, NRO</i>	L
Chestor, William	1483 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/3/14, SAC, SA</i>	L - precis
Martynson, Halbuthus, senior	1483 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/3/15, SAC, SA</i>	L - PN
Ganne, Katherine	1485 - PW (N)	<i>Caston 248A, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Hopton, Thomas	1486 - PW	<i>ProbReg 5; f.288r, PECY</i>	E - full
Butt, Margery, widow	1486 - PW	<i>Aubry 93, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Dawnett, John	1486 - PW	<i>Aubry 94, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Westewynd, Peter, mariner	1486 - PW	<i>Aubry 93, 94, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Wiseman, Joan, widow	1486 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/3/34, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Thompson, Richard	1487 - PW	<i>Aubry 67, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Totemay, Henry	1487 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/3/47, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Gesylham, Thomas	1489 - PW	<i>Wolman 99, 100, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Chery, William	1490 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/3/99, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Goodman, Joan, widow	1490 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/3/93, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Frank/e, John	1491 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/3/122, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Gardner, William	1491 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/3/121, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Pumpowe, Roger	1491 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/3/123, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Wellys, William	1491 - PW	<i>Woolman 79, NCC, NRO</i>	L - precis
Barker, Richard	1492 - PW	<i>Woolman 85, 86, NCC, NRO</i>	L - precis

Balle, Nicholas	1493 - A	<i>Woolman 3, NCC, NRO</i>	L
Bosham, Thomas	1494 - PW	<i>Typpes 84, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Cooke, Richard, mariner	1495 - PW	<i>PROB11/10/436, PCC, TNA</i>	E - PN
Dav/e/y, John	1495 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/3/160, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Gune, John	1496 - A	<i>Woolman 11, NCC, NRO</i>	L
Chylderhows, Joan	1498 - PW	<i>Multon 83, 84, NCC, NRO</i>	L - precis
Marten, John	1498 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/3/226, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Bosewell, William, lately rector	1499 - PW	<i>Reg. Morton 2, f.50, LAM</i>	L - PN
Chylderows, John, the elder	1500 - PW	<i>Cage 185, 186, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Lynsey, William	1500 - A	<i>Cage 25, NCC, NRO</i>	L
Osberne, Sir Thomas, priest	1501 - PW	<i>Popy 47, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Bowen/Broyn, Henry	1503 - PW	<i>Popy 391, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Emson, Simon	1505 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/4/209, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Peyrs, John	1505 - PW	<i>PROB11/15/92, PCC, TNA</i>	E - full
Peers, Walter	1506 - PW	<i>Ryxe 140, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Bosom, William	1508 - PW	<i>Spytymber 55, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Peers, Elizabeth	1508 - PW	<i>PROB11/16/76, PCC, TNA</i>	E - full
Brankaster, Harry, mariner	1510 - OW 1510 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/2/7/8, SAC, SA IC/AA2/5/118, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Cornelyte/Cornelyce, John	1510 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/5/183, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Robenson, Geoffrey	1510 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/5/188, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Crede, John	1511 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/5/230, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Rutter, John	1511 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/5/240, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Blumfield, John	1513 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/7/26, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Rudnell, Robert	1513 - PW	<i>Coppinger 108, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Bonore, John	1517 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/7/226, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Chylderous, John	1519 - OW 1519 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/5/1/20, SAC, SA IC/AA2/8/82, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Herne, John	1520 - OW 1520 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/6/1/3, SAC, SA IC/AA2/6/43 &amp; 75, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Peirs, Harry	1523 - OW 1523 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/6/4/37, SAC, SA IC/AA2/8/295, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Dawson, John	1525 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/9/108, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Welles, Nicholas	1527 - PW 1527 - OW 1527 - PW	<i>Attmere 437, 438, NCC, NRO IC/AA1/8/105, SAC, SA IC/AA2/10/13, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Bekke, Downy, mariner	1528 - OW 1528 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/8/59, SAC, SA IC/AA2/10/41, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Hawkins, Robert, the elder, mariner	1528 - OW 1528 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/8/103, SAC, SA IC/AA2/10/16, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Rowll, Edward	1531 - OW 1531 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/7/19, SAC, SA IC/AA2/10/188, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Lee, Robert	1533 - OW 1533 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/9/21, SAC, SA IC/AA2/11/139, SAC, SA</i>	E - full

Alcock/e, Thomas	1534 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/12/8, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Anderson, Thomas	1535 - OW 1535 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/9/214, SAC, SA IC/AA2/12/133, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Burrell, John	1535 - OW 1535 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/9/221, SAC, SA IC/AA2/12/131, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Oxenhed, Margaret	1535 - OW 1535 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/9/160, SAC, SA IC/AA2/12/35, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Blomevyle, Thomas	1536 - OW 1536 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/9/195, SAC, SA IC/AA2/12/178, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Spooner, James, merchant	1537 – PW	<i>PROB11/26/215, PCC, TNA</i>	E - full
Stalys, Thomas	1538 - OW 1538 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/10/119, SAC, SA IC/AA2/13/79, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Kingham, John	1541 - OW 1541 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/12/49, SAC, SA IC/AA2/14/60, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Amis, Robert, mariner	1541 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/13/322, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Lawson, Henry	1544 - PW	<i>Whyteffott 91, 92, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Hawkyn, Robert	1545 - OW 1545 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/13/207, SAC, SA IC/AA2/15/71, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Boty/Botye, John, husbandman	1548 – PW	<i>Wymer 217, 218, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Lownde, John	1550 – A	<i>AAB 1549-1555 f. 41, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Shawburye, John	1550 – A	<i>AAB 1549-1555 f. 75, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Stary, Robert	1550 - PW	<i>Corant 108, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Carding, William	1551 - OW 1551 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/14/202, SAC, SA IC/AA2/16/236, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Cardye, John	1551 – A	<i>AAB 1549-1555 f. 97, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Sampson, Joan, widow	1551 - OW 1551 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/14/156, SAC, SA IC/AA2/16/179, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Burrell/Buryell, Edward, mariner	1552 – PW	<i>Lyncolne 52, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Leske, John, mariner	1552 - OW 1552 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/14/277, SAC, SA IC/AA2/16/319, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Rochester, John	1552 - OW 1552 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/14/391, SAC, SA IC/AA2/16/457, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Cook/e, John	1553 - OW 1553 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/14/530, SAC, SA IC/AA2/16/647, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Watson, George	1553 – A	<i>AAB 1549-1555 fo.204, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Bacon, Thomas (Hacon)	1554 – A	<i>AAB 1549-1555 f. 279, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Franklin, Edmund	1555 - PW	<i>Walpoole 165, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Howson, John	1555 – A	<i>AAB 1549-1555 f. 320, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full

Shawbery, William	1555 - OW 1555 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/15/47, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/17/298, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Alce, James	1557 - A	<i>AAB 1555-1558 f. 235, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Spooner, William, clerk, parson	1557 - PW	<i>Hustinges 43, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Brown/e, Thomas, mariner	1558 - OW 1558 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/16/324b, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/18/592, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Hardye, Beatrix	1558 - A	<i>AAB 1558-1560 f. 66, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Cullys/Colls, Robert, husbandman	1558 - PW	<i>Jerves 99, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Leske, Joan, widow	1558 - PW 1558 - A	<i>Ingold 332, NCC, NRO</i> <i>AAB 1558-1560 f. 123, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Wylson, Alice	1559 - A	<i>AAB 1558-1560 f. 148, NCC, NRO</i>	L - full
Benefyce, George	1560 - A	<i>AAB 1560-1563 f. 83, NCC, NRO</i>	L - full
Allyson, Richard	1563 - A	<i>AAB 1563-1570 f. 9, NCC, NRO</i>	L - full
Underwoode, Thomas	1565 - A	<i>AAB 1563-1570 f. 168, NCC, NRO</i>	L - full
Appleby, Henry, mariner	1567 - OW	<i>IC/AA1/20/13, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Benyfycce, John, mariner	1568 - OW	<i>IC/AA1/20/137, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Browne, Nicholas	1569 - OW 1569 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/21/70, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/2/23/133, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Underwood, Anne, widow	1569 - OW 1569 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/21/56, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/23/108, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Brown, Agnes, late wife of Nicholas	1570 - OW 1570 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/21/198, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/23/296, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Watson, Elizabeth	1570 - A	<i>AAB 1570-1579 f. 33, NCC, NRO</i>	L - full
Warne, John	1572 - A	<i>AAB 1570-1579 f. 163, NCC, NRO</i>	L - full
Perse, Walter	1573 - OW 1573 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/22/178, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/24/280, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Barfot, Edmund, miller	1574 - OW 1574 - PW 1575 - OW	<i>IC/AA1/23/12, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/25/23, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC500/51/1223, SudAC, SA</i>	E - full
Barfott, Alice, widow	1576 - OW 1576 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/24/16, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/26/74, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Lyne, Thomas	1577 - PW 1578 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/26/259, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/27/146, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Strangman, Richard, yeoman	1579 - OW 1579 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/25/130, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/27/231, SAC, SA</i>	E - full

Catterson, James, mariner	1584 - OW 1584 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/28/114, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/30/262, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Russhmere, Thomas	1585 - A	<i>AAB 1581-1589 f. 83, 84, NCC, NRO</i>	L - full
Russhmere, Margaret	1585 - A	<i>AAB 1581-1589 f. 85, NCC, NRO</i>	L - full
Large, Valentine	1586 - A	<i>AAB 1581-1589 f. 117, NCC, NRO</i>	L - full
Catterson, Alice, widow	1587 - OW 1587 - PW	<i>IC/AA2/29/211, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/31/276, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Charrold/e, William, husbandman	1587 - OW 1587 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/29/162, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/31/405, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Large, Agnes/Ann, widow	1587 - PW (N) 1587 - A 1587 - I	<i>Homes 172, NCC, NRO</i> <i>AAB 1581-1589 f. 139, NCC, NRO</i> <i>DN/INV3/47, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Newell, John	1587 - OW (N) 1587 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/29/159, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/31/421, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Newman, Thomas	1589 - A	<i>AAB 1589-1605 f. 18, NCC, NRO</i>	L - full
Hubberd, Thomas	1593 - OW 1593 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/7/46, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/34/564, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Peirse, Beatrice	1596 - A	<i>AAB 1589-1605 f. 178, NCC, NRO</i>	L - full
Lame/Lambe/Larne, Richard	1608 - OW 1608 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/44/10, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/42/264, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Betts, Thomas, labourer	1610 - OW	<i>IC/AA1/46/128, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Bird/e, John	1612 - A	<i>IC/AA6/1/53, SAC, SA</i>	L - full
Benefice, Edward, yeoman	1616 - OW 1616 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/52/45, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/49/62, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Johnupe (Jallop), Ambrose, husbandman	1625 - OW 1625 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/61/56, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/56/87, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Halfknight, Thomas	1625 - A	<i>IC/AA6/7/30, SAC, SA</i>	L - full
Musfor (Insufer), Nicholas, husbandman	1630 - OW 1630 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/66/31, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/59/195, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Musforde, John	1631 - A	<i>IC/AA6/10/30, SAC, SA</i>	L - full
Sheming, William	1631 - A	<i>IC/AA6/10/24, SAC, SA</i>	L - full
Gellence, Edmund	1636 - PW 1636 - I	<i>Spendlove 55, NCC, NRO</i> <i>DN/INV42/13, NCC, NRO</i>	E - full
Ireland, Robert	1637 - A	<i>IC/AA6/15/30, SAC, SA</i>	L - full
Ireland, Robert	1639 - OW(N) 1639 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/77/2/65, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/65/170, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Haunce, John, husbandman	1639 - OW 1639 - PW	<i>IC/AA1/76/1/65, SAC, SA</i> <i>IC/AA2/65/320, SAC, SA</i>	E - full
Betts, Robert	1645 - A	<i>IC/AA6/20/11, SAC, SA</i>	L - full
Berry, John	1645 - A	<i>IC/AA6/20/90, SAC, SA</i>	L - full

Julians, Edmund	1648 - OW (N)	IC/AA1/86/59, SAC, SA	E - full
Leece, John, yeoman	1672 - OW (N)	IC/AA1/102/26, SAC, SA	E - full

Notes - PW = probate copy will; OW = original copy will; (N) = nuncupative will; A = administration; AAB = Administration act book, PRCC 2/2; SAC = Suffolk Archdeaconry Court; SudAC = Sudbury Archdeaconry Court; NCC = Norwich Consistory Court, PRCC 1/2; LAM = Lambeth Palace Library; PCC = Prerogative Court of Canterbury; PECY = Prerogative and Exchequer Court of York; SA = Suffolk Archives; NRO = Norfolk Record Office; TNA = The National Archives; PE = Transcript compiled by Peter Northeast – Ref HD2448/1/1/159, SA; Precis = Preamble, burial, references to vessels, nets, guild, chapel, priories, executors, witnesses; Full = Full transcription of will. If both OW and PW exist, then original will has been transcribed; L = Latin will; E = English will.

Sources – M.A. Farrow, *Index to Wills Proved in the Consistory Court of Norwich, 1604-1686*, Norfolk Record Society 28 (Norwich: Norfolk Record Society, 1958); M.A. Farrow and Percy Millican, *Index to Wills Proved in the Consistory Court of Norwich, 1550-1603*, British Records Society 73 (Keele, Staffordshire: British Record Society, 1950); M.A. Farrow, *Index to Wills Proved in the Consistory Court of Norwich, 1370-1550*, British Records Society 69 (Keele, Staffordshire: British Record Society, 1945); M. E. Grimwade, *Index of the Probate Records of the Court of the Archdeacon of Suffolk, 1444-1700, L-Z*, ed. R. K. Serjeant and W. R. Serjeant, vol. 2, Index Library: 91 (Keele, Staffordshire: British Record Society, 1980); M. E. Grimwade, *Index of the Probate Records of the Court of the Archdeacon of Suffolk, 1444-1700, A-K*, ed. R. K. Serjeant and W. R. Serjeant, vol. 1, The Index Library: 90 (Keele, Staffordshire: British Record Society, 1979); M. E. Grimwade, *Index of the Probate Records of the Court of the Archdeacon of Sudbury 1354-1700, A-K*, ed. R. K. Serjeant and W. R. Serjeant, vol. 1, The Index Library: 95 (Keele, Staffordshire: British Record Society, 1984); The National Archives, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>, accessed 28/07/2022; Suffolk Archives, <https://www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/>, accessed 28/07/2022; Norfolk Record Office, <https://www.archives.norfolk.gov.uk/>, accessed 28/07/2022; York Probate records at Find My Past, <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>, accessed 28/07/2022.

**Table 30 - Wills and administrations of Easton Bavents testators - breakdown by ecclesiastical court with number and percentage of women included within the figure**

Date span	No. of NCC wills (no. of women)	No. of SAC wills (no. of women)	No. of other wills (no. of women)	No. of NCC Admins (no. of women)	No. of SAC Admins (no. of women)	Total (no. and % of women)
1376 - 1450	3	3 (1)	0	6	0	12 (17%)
1451 – 1475	11 (4)	16 (4)	0	17 (5)	0	44 (30%)
1476 – 1500	12 (3)	12 (3)	3	5	0	32 (19%)
1501 – 1525	4	13	2 (1)	0	0	19 (5%)
1526 – 1550	4 (1)	14	1	2	0	21 (5%)
1551 – 1575	5 (1)	14 (3)	1	12 (3)	0	32 (22%)
1576 – 1600	1 (1)	8 (2)	0	5 (2)	0	14 (36%)
1601 – 1625	0	4	0	0	2	6
1626 – 1650	1	4	0	0	5	10
1651 – 1675	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>*191 (35) (19%)</b>

Note – \* - There were a total of 191 wills and administrations. Two testators had wills proven twice at two separate courts, hence only 189 separate testators.

**Appendix 2 - Extant manorial records of the manor of Easton Bavents with Empoles, 1275-1689**

<b>Covering Dates</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Archive Ref</b>	<b>Location</b>
	<b>Court rolls/books</b>		
1275-1286	Court roll	NRA17140 Russell Box793/2	Bed. A
1307-1315	Court roll	NRA17140 Russell Box793/1	Bed. A
1311-1311	Court roll	NRA17140 Russell Box793/2	Bed. A
1321-1328	Court roll	NRA17140 Russell Box793/1	Bed. A
1342-1360	Court roll	NRA17140 Russell Box 793/3	Bed. A
1363-1364	Court roll	NRA17140 Russell Box 793/3	Bed. A
1367-1371	Court roll	NRA17140 Russell Box 793/4	Bed. A
1369-1372	Court roll	NRA17140 Russell Box 793/3	Bed. A
1390-1390	Court roll	NRA17140 Russell Box793/5	Bed. A
1397-1398	Court roll, including estreats – with Enepolys – bound with Northal and Westhale manors	NRA17140 Russell Box793/5	Bed. A
1402-1402	Court roll, with Empoles – bound with Chedeston, Walpole and Darsham manors	NRA17140 Russell Box793/6	Bed. A
1402-1405	Court roll, with Empoles	NRA17140 Russell Box793/7	Bed. A
1432-1444	Court roll	NRA17140 Russell Box793/8	Bed. A
1437-1439	Court roll – with Empoles bound with Westhall manor	NRA17140 Russell Box793/9	Bed. A
1449-1461	Court roll – with Empoles, bound with Westhall manor	NRA17140 Russell Box793/8	Bed. A
1456-1457	Court roll for Manor of Southwold, with capital pledge for Easton listed	SC 2/203/110	TNA
1459-1485	Court roll – with Empoles (2 rolls)	NRA17140 Russell Box793/10-11	Bed. A
1494-1501	Court roll – with Empoles	NRA17140 Russell Box793/12	Bed. A
1525-1525	Court roll – with Empoles	NRA17140 Russell Box793/13	Bed. A
1532-1535	Court roll – with Empoles	NRA17140 Russell Box793/13	Bed. A
1545-1546	Court roll – with Empoles	NRA17140 Russell Box793/13	Bed. A
1552-1557	Court roll – with Empoles (2 rolls)	NRA17140 Russell Box793/14-15	Bed. A

1605-1610	Court book - with Empoles – bound with Kessingland with Stapletons, Burgh Castle and Kessingland manors	SC 2/203/93	TNA
1610-1611	Court roll	NRA17140 Russell Box793/16	Bed. A
1634-1634	Court roll	NRA17140 Russell Box793/16	Bed. A
1641-1689	Court book – with Empoles (draft)	1309:17079/Gooch/4/365	SA
	<b>Accounts</b>		
1330-1331	Account roll – serjeants	V5/19/1/1.1	SA
1343-1344	Account roll – reeves	V5/19/1/1.2	SA
1348-1350	Account roll – serjeants	V5/19/1/1.3	SA
1356-1357	Account roll – serjeants (2 rolls)	V5/19/1/1.4-5	SA
1376-1378	Account roll – serjeants (2 rolls)	V5/19/1/1.6-7	SA
1382-1383	Account roll – bailiffs	V5/19/1/1.8	SA
1391-1392	Account roll – bailiffs	V5/19/1/1.9	SA
1394-1396	Account roll – bailiffs	V5/19/1/1.10	SA
1417-1417	Account roll – bailiffs	V5/19/1/1.11	SA
1429-1432	Account roll – bailiffs (2 rolls)	V5/19/1/1.12-13	SA
1436-1437	Account roll – bailiffs	V5/19/1/1.14	SA
1459-1460	Account roll – bailiffs	V5/19/1/1.15	SA
1461-1481	Account roll – bailiffs	V5/19/1/1.16	SA
1465-1466	Account roll – bailiffs	V5/19/1/1.17	SA
	<b>Survey</b>		
1531-1531	Survey	NRA17140 Russell Box793	Bed. A
	<b>Estreats</b>		
1397-1398	Court roll, including estreats – with Enepolys – bound with Northal and Westhale manors	NRA17140 Russell Box793/5	Bed. A
1505-1506	Estreats – bound with Westhall manor rolls	HA30/50/22/20.9 (13)	SA

Note - Dating of the uncatalogued court rolls NRA17140 Russell Box793/1-16 was undertaken from digital images of the original rolls. Some of the heads of the membranes were not fully visible or were partly obscured. Bed. A = Bedfordshire Archives, SA = Suffolk Archives.

Sources – See archival references

**Appendix 3 – Land holdings, property, roads and topographical features in Easton Bavents, as listed in the c.1431-1531 manorial survey and probate records, 1376-1672**

**Named holdings, property and topographical features**

<b>Named holdings, property and features - listed alphabetically by name</b>	<b>Type of holding</b>	<b>Tenure of holding</b>	<b>Testators name or holders name given in the survey</b>	<b>c.1431- 1531 Survey - folio</b>	<b>Date of will</b>
Anneysonnes	tenement	free?		3	
Bacons	messuage		Amis		1541
Bacons/Hacons	tenement at the towns end with block yard?		Burrell		1552
Barkers	tenement		Blomevyle		1536
Belmans	messuage		Peyrs		1505
Beston Close	close		Botye		1548
<b>Blakehall</b>	tenement		Robenson		1510
<b>Blakesals</b>	ground		Catterson		1584
Blotold	tenement	customary?		8	
Blowtyshill	hill or higher ground			6	
Boldesmere	marsh	common	not given	3	
Bosemere/Gosemere	tenement	customary	Terry	12	
Brocees	land	demesne		5	
Bromehill	field			2	
Bromesclose	close	demesne	of the Lord	5	
Bukescroft	land		not given	2	
Caddis yard	fish barrel store		Barfott, Alice		1576
Calowdon	field			6	
Cancellerys	tenement		Peyrs		1505
Cattersons	land		Catterson		1587
Cemetery	cemetery			3, 14	
Chapel of St Margaret	chapel			3, 5, 7	
Church of St Nicholas	church			multiple	
Clerks	tenement and ground	bond	Botye		1548
<b>Clobberd Close</b>	house and land and pightle		Wellys		1528
<b>Clubbards</b>	land		Blomevyle		1536
Common Marsh	marsh	common		2	
Crosses	tenement		Pumpowe		1491
Dyers	tenement with appts		Catterson		1584

<b>Emmys</b>	tenement		Hawkins		1528
<b>Emys</b>	tenement land and appurts		Hawkins		1545
<b>Estres</b>	tenement		Piers		1505
<b>Estres</b>	tenement		Sponer		1537
Fennepightle	pightle	demesne	Spicer	2	
Full Close	close			2	
<b>Gardyners</b>	tenement		Piers		1505
<b>Garners</b>	tenement		Sponer		1537
<b>Garners</b>	tenement		Sponer		1537
Gildenacre	land	demesne	vacant	3	
Gosemere / Bosemere?	tenement	customary	Terry	16	
Gudds/Guiddis	tenement & appts		Amis		1541
Halle Close	close	demesne	Sponer - vacant in 1531	2	
Haven				7	
<b>Hawes Close also Osgotte Pightle</b>	pightle	demesne	Pyeres	2	
<b>Hawys Close</b>	close		Chery		1490
Jekkys yerd	toft	free		17	
<b>Jeyes</b>	tenement		Sponer		1537
<b>Joyes</b>	tenement		Piers		1505
<b>Kychencroft</b>	close		In the hands of the lady	2	
<b>Kytchen</b>	west end of a tenement with hempland attached		Charrolde		1587
<b>Latbettars – see Ledbetters</b>	house - fee simple		Burrell		1552
<b>Lawghters</b>	house		Catterson		1584
<b>Lawters</b>	tenement		Catterson		1587
<b>Ledbetters – see Latbettars</b>	ground		Catterson		1584
Longfurlong	land	demesne		3	
Lumpswell - a well?	also the name of a quarentena			4	
Mere (the)	lies in the north of the manor			7	
<b>Mill – see also Windmill</b>		bought from his Uncle Neve in Wymundham	Barfoote		1575
North hethe	sheep pasture	not subject to common rights		7	
Osgotte Pyghtell also Hawes Close	pightle/close	demesne	Pyeres	2	

Palfrey Land	demesne land	demesne	In the hands of the lady	2	
Parsons	tenement with garden	free	Ronghed	13	
Petteffurlong	quarentena		Not given	4	
Pompoys	tenement		Hawkyngs		1528
Rabbit Warren (old)				3	
Rectory				16	
Robynswell	land			5	
Rowhedes	land	demesne	Cate	2	
Sallowe Close	great close	copyhold of Sir Owen Hopton	Perse		1573
Skotlandrowe	one tenement			6	
South hethe				7	
Stepel Land	land		Botye		1548
Stirrops	messuage		Peyrs		1505
Stynylynges - devastated	land			4	
Turwakes?	house		Chery		1490
Waxland	land		Reynsheff	18	
<b>Windmill</b>			Boshum		1494
<b>Windmill</b>			Bosum		1508
<b>Windmill - mound</b>				5	
Wymond	tenement with lands and appurts		Lawson		1544

Note – Properties in bold have nominal linkage to one adjacent to it or as noted. ? = unsure of transcription/translation

Sources – See c.1431-1531 manorial survey; for will references see Appendix 1.

### Named roads, ways and footpaths

Description	c.1431-1531 Survey - folios
Common way leading from the manor towards Reydon	2, 9
The way towards the west (somewhere near the cemetery)	3
Way which leads from the manor to the Chapel of St Margaret and the old rabbit warren	3
Common way leading from the church of EB to Reydon	4, 8, 10, 11, 13-17, 19
Mylleway/Millway	4, -6, 8, 10, 14-16
Way leading to Boldesmere	5
Way leading from the Chapel of St Margaret to Reydon	5
Churchway	5, 11-19
Footpath leading from Blowtyshill to Skotlandrowe	6, 12, 15, 16, 18
Commonway or common footpath from the sea to the vill of EB	7, 15, 18

Kingsway	8-10, 12, 13
second Kingsway	13, 14
Common way leading from the Church to the sea	10
Second common way	14
common way	14
common footpath	16
Forham Way	9

Source – See c.1431-1531 manorial survey

### Un-named holdings and property listed in wills - listed alphabetically by name of testator

Type of holding	Tenure of holding	Name of testator	Date of will
house and tenements with appts		Alcocke	1534
tenement with appts	fee simple	Anderson	1535
house		Appleby	1567
house		Barfott - Alice	1576
2 tenements plus 4 acres of land	copyhold	Benefice	1616
land - 1 acre	freehold	Benefice	1616
messuages lands and tenements		Benefice	1616
house and appts		Benefyce	1568
tenement		Betts	1610
house and lands		Blomevyle	1536
tenement and lands		Blumfeld	1513
messuage with land		Botye	1548
my place with appts		Brankaster	1508
house and lands	free and bond	Burwell	1552
house and lands		Buryell	1552
2 tenements		Burell	1535
tenement		Butt, Margery – widow	1486
tenement with apps		Carding	1551
little house	fee simple	Carding	1551
lands, tenements and herrediments	free or coppie	Catterson	1584
land - half an acres	copyhold	Catterson	1584
other lands, tenements and herredits		Charrolde	1587
messuage, lands, pastures, fines and rents with appurts		Chylderous	1519
messuage with lands and tenements, rents and fines		Chylderows	1500
house and lands		Cooke	1553
great place with all lands & all other lands & tenements		Cook	1495
parcel of ground - near the 'pere' tree		Cook	1495
messuage with lands and tenements, rents and fines	free and bond	Cornelyce	1510
tenement		Crede	1511
tenement		Davy	1495
tenement		Dawnett	1486

tenement		Dawson	1525
tenement		Emson	1505
house,		Ffranke	1491
tenement and close	bond	Ffranke	1491
tenement	free	Ffranke	1491
house and lands	he is farmer of the manor	Franklin	1553
tenement with lands		Gardner	1491
tenement		Gesyllym	1489
little tenement (occupied by Harry Bowyn)		Gesyllym	1489
tenement		Goodman, Johan - widow	1490
mansion		Halbuttus	1483
tenement with lands	free and copy	Johnupe	1625
house		Kingham	1541
house and lands	bond and free	Lee	1533
house with appurts		Leske	1552
tenement & house and appurts		Lynne	1578
tenement with appurts		Newell	1587
house		Oxenhead, Margaret	1535
tenement with lands		Peirs	1523
head messuage		Peyrs	1505
tenement with land	free and copy	Piers	1505
land abutting the Churchway		Piers	1505
pightel		Piers	1505
tenement		Pumpowe	1490
new tenement		Robenson	1510
house		Rochester	1552
tenements and land belonging		Rowlle	1531
tenements and land belonging		Rowlle	1531
tenement		Rudnall	1513
tenements and lands		Rudnall	1513
tenement		Rutter	1511
tenement or messuage with appurts		Samson - Johanne	1551
pyghtell 4 acres	copyhold	Samson - Johanne	1551
land (near Cherys Close)		Sponer	1537
meadow		Sponer	1537
houses and land		Sponer - clerk	1557
house		Starye	1550
chamber in house		Strangeman/Strongman	1579
house, lands and tenements	free and bond	Strangeman/Strongman	1579
tenement with land		Wellys	1528
my place		Westwynd	1486

Source – for will references see Appendix 1

## **Appendix 4 – Tables 1-29**

**Table 1 - Geographical limits of the manorial lordships from Pakefield to Dunwich, 1236-37**

<b>Vill</b>	<b>Extent of coastline under discussion – Latin transcription</b>	<b>Holder of manorial rights</b>
Pakefield and Kessingland		Henricus Colvile and Thomas Batun ( <i>Bavent/Bacon?</i> )
Benacre	from the port of Kessingland to the port of Benacre	Simon Perpond
Northaling ( <i>Northales</i> )	from the port of Benacre to the Southmere	Bailivus de Blything ( <i>Bailiff of Blything - Thomas de Bavent?</i> )
Eston	from Southmere to Eston-Stone	Thomas Bavent
Southwold	from Eston-Stone to the south of Eycliff	Comes Gloucestriae ( <i>Earl of Gloucester</i> )
Blyburgh & Walberswick	from Eycliff to the port of Dunwich	Dame Margeria Cressy

Sources - Alfred Inigo Suckling, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Suffolk*: vol. 2 (J. Weale, 1848), 305

**Table 2 – Crude population totals and trends, 1086-1327**

	1086 Domesday - base figure	1086 Domesday - estimated total population	1327 Lay Subsidy - base figure	1327 Lay Subsidy - estimated total population	% Change –1086 to 1327
<b>Kessingland</b>	59 (2 slaves)	292	73	1241	325% increase
<b>Benacre*</b>	1	6		31 households – potentially 182 persons	
<b>Northales</b>	8 (0 slaves)	40	71	1207	2,918% increase
<b>South Cove</b>	12 (0 slaves)	59	19	323	447% increase
<b>Easton</b>	13 (1 slave)	64	18	306	378% increase
<b>Reydon</b>	60 (1 slave)	297	37	629	112% increase
<b>Southwold</b>	9 (0 slaves)	45	21	357	693% increase
<b>English population trends – Broadberry et al.</b>					(1086- 1315) 175% increase
<b>Equation used</b>	<b>Goose and Hinde</b> household multiplier x 4.5 10% undercount x 1.1 (Assuming a slave has a family)		<b>Bailey</b> Cites x 15 for crude minimum population Cites x 19 for crude maximum population Multiplier of x 17 used		

Note - Parishes listed in geographical position from north to south

\* Benacre was listed in 1327 subsidy along with the vills of Bulcamp and Bregg and it has been impossible to split the listings. The return of Benacre for the 1381 Poll Tax has survived (mutilated), and the figure is given here purely for interest. It cannot be used for comparator purposes due to its different composition.

Sources - *Little Domesday Book: Suffolk. Introduction Translation and Indexes* (London: Alecto Historical Editions, 2000); Sydenham Henry Augustus Hervey, *Suffolk 1327*, vol. II, Suffolk Green Books, IX (Woodbridge: George Booth, 1906), Nigel Goose and Andrew Hinde, 'Estimating Local Population Sizes at Fixed Points in Time: Part II - Specific Sources', *Local Population Studies* 78 (2007); Stephen Broadberry, Bruce M.S. Campbell, and Bas van Leeuwen, 'English Medieval Population: Reconciling Time Series and Cross-Sectional Evidence', Reconstructing the National Income of Britain and Holland, c.1270/1500 to 1850 (Leverhulme Trust, July 2010); Mark Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk: An Economic and Social History, 1200-1500*, vol. 1, History of Suffolk (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 67; Powell, Edgar. *The Rising in East Anglia in 1381, with an Appendix Containing The Suffolk Poll Tax Lists For That Year*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896; Carolyn C. Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, vol. 2, Records of Social and Economic History. New Series: 29 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2001).

**Table 3 – Crude population totals and trends, 1327-1524**

	1327 Lay Subsidy - base figure	1327 Lay Subsidy - estimated total population	1524 Lay Subsidy - base figure	1524 Lay Subsidy - estimated total population	% Change - 1327 to 1524
<b>Kessingland</b>	73	1241	69	372	70% decrease
<b>Benacre*</b>		31 households – potentially 182 persons	40	215	
<b>Covehithe**</b>	71	1207	61	329	73% decrease
<b>South Cove</b>	19	323	18	97	70% decrease
<b>Easton Bavents</b>	18	306	60	324	6% increase
<b>Reydon</b>	37	629	30	162	74% decrease
<b>Southwold</b>	21	357	115	620	74% increase
<b>English population trends – Broadberry et al.</b>					(1300-1377) 42% decrease (1377-1541) 13% increase
<b>Equation used</b>	<b>Bailey</b> Cites x 15 for crude minimum population Cites x 19 for crude maximum population Multiplier of x 17 used		<b>Goose and Hinde</b>  i - (household multiplier x 4.5 and then x 1.4 30% undercount) ii - (x1.6 to allow for under 16s - x 2 for female population, x1.4 for 30% undercount) Mean of the two		

\* Benacre was listed in 1327 subsidy along with the vills of Bulcamp and Bregg and it has been impossible to split the listings. The return of Benacre for the 1381 Poll Tax has survived (mutilated), and the figure is given here purely for interest. It cannot be used for comparator purposes due to its different composition.

\*\* Northales in 1524 is now listed as Coveheyth otherwise Northales.

Sources - Sydenham Henry Augustus Hervey, *Suffolk 1327*, vol. II, Suffolk Green Books, IX (Woodbridge: George Booth, 1906), Sydenham Henry Augustus Hervey, *Suffolk 1524*, Suffolk Green Books, X (Woodbridge: G. Booth, 1910); Nigel Goose and Andrew Hinde, 'Estimating Local Population Sizes at Fixed Points in Time: Part II - Specific Sources', *Local Population Studies* 78 (2007); Stephen Broadberry, Bruce M.S. Campbell, and Bas van Leeuwen, 'English Medieval Population' (Leverhulme Trust, July 2010); Mark Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk: An Economic and Social History, 1200-1500*, vol. 1, History of Suffolk (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 67; *The Rising in East Anglia in 1381, with an Appendix Containing The Suffolk Poll Tax Lists For That Year*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896; Carolyn C. Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, vol. 2, Records of Social and Economic History. New Series: 29 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2001).

**Table 4 – Crude population totals and trends, 1524-1603**

	1524 Lay Subsidy - est. total population	1603 Ecclesiastical Return base figure	1603 Ecclesiastical Return est. total population	% Change 1524 - 1603
<b>Kessingland</b>	372	120	285	23% decrease
<b>Benacre</b>	215	80	190	12% decrease
<b>Covehithe</b>	329	130	308	6% decrease
<b>South Cove</b>	97	55	130	34% increase
<b>Easton Bavents</b>	324	46	109	66% decrease
<b>Reydon</b>	162		no return	
<b>Southwold</b>	620		no returns	
<b>English population trends</b>				1541-1606 53% increase
<b>Equation used - Goose and Hinde</b>		Multiplier of 1.54 for 35% undercount and then again x 1.54 for 35% underage		

Notes - The table of quinquennial English population totals calculated by Wrigley & Schofield do not coincide with the dates selected in the table above. The date spans used for comparison are 1541-1606, 1606-1676. E. A.

Wrigley and Roger Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction*, 1st pbk. ed., with new introd. (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 208-9.

Sources - Sydenham Henry Augustus Hervey, *Suffolk 1524*, Suffolk Green Books, X (Woodbridge: G. Booth, 1910); Alan Dyer and D. M. Palliser, eds., *The Diocesan Population Returns For 1563 and 1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Charles Edward Banks

**Table 5 – Comparison percentage of 1327 Lay Subsidy payments – average paid per person and percentage  
paid by wealth and social hierarchy**

VIII - 1327	No of payees	% - 5s and above – Lord of the manor etc.	% over 2s -4s 11d	% over 1s - 2s	% 1s and under	Total of tax paid in pence	Average paid per person in pence
<b>Kessingland (Mutford hundred)</b>	73	1%	5%	32%	62%	984d	13d
<b>Benacre *</b>							
<b>Northales</b>	73	3%	15%	51%	31%	1,488d	20d
<b>South Cove</b>	19	0%	5%	26%	69%	250d	13d
<b>Easton</b>	18	11%	6%	44%	39%	384d	21d
<b>Reydon</b>	37	0%	40.5%	21.5%	38%	733d	20d
<b>Southwold</b>	21	5%	29%	57%	9%	595d	28d
<b>Blything Hundred</b>	1002					18,340d	18d
<b>Mutford Hundred</b>	213					3168d	15d

Note \* – Due to Benacre being listed in 1327 along with the vills of Bulcampe and Bregg, no taxable wealth data can be extracted and has been omitted from this table.

Source - Sydenham Henry Augustus Hervey, *Suffolk 1327*, vol. II, Suffolk Green Books, IX (Woodbridge: George Booth, 1906). Wealth and social hierarchy percentages based on break down from Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village : Terling, 1525-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 33-34.

**Table 6 – Comparison of percentage of 1524 Lay Subsidy payments - average paid per person and percentage paid by wealth and social hierarchy**

Vill - 1524	No of payees	£10-£54 land or goods – gentry, large farmers, merchants, boat owners	Over £2-£8 yeomen, substantial husbandmen, boat owners	£2 goods – husbandmen, mariners, fishermen	under £2 land or earnings – labourers, cottagers	Total amount paid in pence	Average paid per person in pence
<b>Kessingland (Mutford Hundred)</b>	68	12%	28%	22%	38%	1602	24d
<b>Benacre</b>	40	5%	27.5%	12.5%	55%	558	14d
<b>Covehithe**</b>	62	6%	28%	46%	20%	1998	33d
<b>South Cove</b>	18	5.50%	56%	5.50%	33%	375	21d
<b>Easton Bavents</b>	60	10%	25%	22%	43%	2052	34d
<b>Reydon</b>	30	7%	47%	23%	23%	709	24d
<b>Southwold</b>	115	20%	27%	8%	45%	6038	53d
<b>Blything Hundred</b>	1,840					69,013	37d
<b>Mutford Hundred</b>	326					9,465	29d

Note - Northales in 1524 is now listed as Covehyth otherwise Northales

Source - Sydenham Henry Augustus Hervey, *Suffolk 1524*, Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety, Terling, 1525-1700*, 2001).

**Table 7 – Breakdown of 1568 Lay Subsidy payments based on land or goods, average paid per person, percentage change between 1524 and 1568**

Vill – 1568	No of payees	% of people assessed on land	% of people assessed on goods	% of people listed as immigrants	total amount paid in pence	Average paid per person in pence	% reduction of those liable to pay tax from 1524-1568
<b>Kessingland</b>	17	18%	82%	0%	950d	56d	75%
<b>Benacre</b>	6	67%	33%	0%	252d	42d	85%
<b>Covehithe</b>	19	47%	53%	0%	976d	51d	70%
<b>South Cove</b>	10	40%	60%	0%	812d	74d	44%
<b>Easton Bavents</b>	8	38%	62%	0%	396d	50d	87%
<b>Reydon</b>	18	56%	44%	0%	1158d	64d	40%
<b>Southwold</b>	63	2%	64%	33%	2642d	42d	45%
<b>Hundred of Blything</b>	853	44%	50%	6%	55,645	65d	54%

Source - Sydenham Henry Augustus Hervey, *Suffolk 1568*.

**Table 8 – Breakdown of 1598 Lay Subsidy payments based on land or goods, average paid per person, percentage change between 1568 and 1598**

Vill - 1598	No. of payees	No. of immigrants included in total figure	Total amount in pence paid	average paid per person in pence	% of people assessed on lands	% of people assessed on goods	% of population listed as immigrants	% change of those liable to pay tax from 1568-1598
<b>Kessingland</b>	11	0	1296	118d	55%	45%	0	35% reduction
<b>Benacre</b>	8	0	1296d	162d	88%	12%	0	33% increase
<b>** Covehithe</b>	10	0	960d	96d	100%	0%	0	47% reduction
<b>South Cove</b>	10	0	1648d	165d	30%	70%	0	0%
<b>Easton Bavents</b>	2	0	288d	144d	0%	100%	0	75% reduction
<b>Reydon</b>	15	0	1920d	128d	40%	60%	0	17% reduction
<b>Southwold</b>	62	11	6232d	101d	10%	72%	18%	2% reduction
<b>total of above</b>	118	11	13,640d	116d	32%	58%		

Note - The original 1598 Lay Subsidy uses the term Northales and not Covehithe

Sources –Lay Subsidy 1598, E179/182/427, rots 3d, 4, 4d, 6 and 9, TNA

**Table 9 – Percentage of combined contributions to the Lay Subsidies of 1524, 1568 and 1598 from Easton Bavents, Covehithe/Northales and Southwold only.**

Vill	1524 - 10,088d of tax raised - percentage of the total contributed by each vill	1568 - 4,014d of tax raised - percentage of the total contributed by each vill	1598 - 7,480d of tax raised - percentage of the total contributed by each vill
<b>Covehithe/Northales</b>	20%	24%	13%
<b>Easton Bavents</b>	20%	10%	4%
<b>Southwold</b>	60%	66%	83%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%

Source – Data extracted from Tables 6, 7 and 8.

**Table 10 – Spatial distribution of aliens in Suffolk parishes 1440, 1483 and 1524**

No. of aliens recorded in a Suffolk vill	1440 Subsidy Return		1483 Subsidy Return		1524 Subsidy Return	
	No. of separate vills		No. of separate vills		No. of separate vills	
1	92		36		36	
2	35		13		8	
3-5	19		9		6	
6-10	7		4		5	Including Easton Bavents with 8 aliens
11-20	2		7	Including Easton Bavents with 15 aliens	2	Ipswich with 15 and Lowestoft with 11
21-30	4	Including Easton Bavents with 24 aliens	1 - Bury St Edmunds		0	
31-32	1 Lowestoft		0		0	
33-62	0		0		0	
63	1 Ipswich		0		0	
64-84	0		0		0	
85	0		1 - Ipswich		0	
Number of separate vills where aliens were recorded	161		71		57	

Sources – Suffolk returns as listed on EIDB at <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/>. Originals at TNA - Alien Subsidy, E 179/180/92 parts 1 and 2, 1440; E 179/180/111, 1483; E 179/180/126, 127, 134, 171, 182, 1524/5

**Table 11 – Percentage of aliens listed in 1440 and 1483 designated as householder or non-householder with  
numbers who paid tax in 1483**

Vill	1440			1483					
	House holder	Non- Householder	Total	House holder	No. Paid	Non- Householder	No. Paid	Overall % NOT paid	Total
<b>Kessingland</b>	5 (71%)	2 (29%)	7	0	0	1 (100%)	1	0	1
<b>Covehithe</b>	7 (100%)	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>South Cove</b>	1 (100%)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Easton Bavents</b>	12 (50%)	12 (50%)	24	9 (60%)	9	6 (40%)	6	0	15
<b>Reydon</b>	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Southwold</b>	14 (58%)	10 (42%)	24	4 (21%)	3	15 (79%)	11	26%	19
<b>Walberswick</b>	7 (33.3%)	14 (66.6%)	21	8 (44%)	6	10 (56%)	10	11%	18

Sources - Suffolk returns as listed on EIDB at <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/>. Originals at TNA - Alien Subsidy, E 179/180/92 parts 1 and 2, 1440; E 179/180/111, 1483.

**Table 12 – Comparison of aliens listed in 1524 Lay Subsidy - average tax paid per alien and numbers paying by wealth and social hierarchy**

Vill - 1524	No of aliens	£10-£54 land or goods – gentry, large farmers, merchants	Over £2-£8 yeomen, substantial husbandmen, boat owners	£2 goods – husbandmen, mariners, fishermen	under £2 land, goods or earnings – labourers, cottagers	Total amount paid in pence	Average paid per alien in pence
<b>Kessingland (Mutford hundred)</b>	2	0	0	1	1 (on wages)	32d	16d
<b>Covehithe</b>	1	0	1	0	0	36d	36d
<b>Easton Bavents</b>	8	1	0	1	6 (5 on goods and 1 on wages)	552d	69d
<b>Southwold</b>	9	1	2	0	6 (6 on wages)	274d	30d
<b>Walberswick</b>	1	1	0	0	0	80d	80d
<b>Blything Hundred</b>							31d

Sources - Source - Sydenham Henry Augustus Hervey, *Suffolk 1524*, Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety, Terling, 1525-1700*, 2001).

**Table 13 – Occupational and nationality data of Easton Bavents manorial court participants, 1485**

Court with leet held Tuesday after the feast of Easter day, 2 of Richard III, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1485

Name	Manorial Position	Occupation/Nationality	Source
Barker, Richard	Juror & Capital Pledge	Mariner – Father was listed as Alien in 1440	CP40, 1473, Will 1492, 1440 Alien listing
Bosham, Thomas	Essoin – absent	Miller	Will 1494
Bowyn, Henry	Essoin – absent	Zeelander, net bequests	Will 1503, 1483 Alien listing
Brankaster, Henry	Essoin – proxy	Mariner	Will 1510
Butt, Henry	Essoin – proxy	Mariner	CP40, 1495, 1502
Butt, John	Essoin – absent	Mariner and Zeelander	1440 listing, CP40, 1495 (dec'd at this date)
Chanterell, Roger			
Childerous, John	Juror & Capital Pledge	Yeoman, Husbandman also bequests nets	CP40, 1490, 1498, Will 1500
Cook, Henry	Juror & Capital Pledge	Mariner	CP40, 1473
Cook, Richard	Essoin – absent - Empoles		
Copper, Thomas	Essoin – proxy	Nominal family links to Zeeland	Henry Copper 1483 Alien listing
Dawnett, John	Juror & Capital Pledge	Mariner	CP40, 1483
Emson, Richard			
Emson, Simon	Essoin – absent	Fishing connections – bequests nets – has 'Alien servant'	Will 1505, 1483 Alien listing
Fiske, William	Essoin – proxy – Empoles	Nominal family links with Simon Fiske of Laxfield Husbandman	Will of Simon Fiske
Frank, John	Juror & Capital Pledge	Mariner – has 'Alien servant'	CP40, 1484, 1483 Alien listing
Gardener, William, Snr	Essoin – proxy Juror - Empoles	Mariner	CP40, 1483-1485
Gesilham, Thomas	Capital Pledge	Fishing – bequest nets	Will 1489
Goodman, Roger	Juror & Capital Pledge	Left nets in mothers will, nominal links with vessel trading through Port of London	Will 1490 of Joan Goodman, London Customs accounts, John Goodman of Southwold, 1488
Joye, Richard	Essoin – proxy	Mariner	CP40, 1472, 1485
Lee, John	Essoin – proxy	Master of vessel trading through Port of London	London Customs accounts 1513
Levyn, Henry	Essoin – absent	Listed as 'Alien servant'	1483 Alien Listing
Meke, Nicholas	Essoin – absent	Master of vessel trading through Port of London, also given as mariner	London Customs accounts, 1494, CP40, 1502
Moress, John	Essoin – absent	Nominal links with Dunwich maritime family	Wills of John and Peter Moress, 1450, 1502

Mower, John	Juror – Empoles	Nominal links to Shipman and Southwold mariners in Iceland	CP40, 1422, 841/7/17/3/4
Peres, Roger	Essoin – Proxy Juror- Empoles	Mariner	CP40, 1473
Pompew, Roger	Juror	French, bequests nets	1440 Alien listing, Will 1491
Purpale?, Richard			
Roter, John			
Sanderson, Wiliam			
Tomson, William	Juror & Capital Pledge	Nominal links with fishing bequests of nets and salt	Will of Richard Tomson 1487
Wellys, William	Juror & Capital Pledge	Mariner	CP40, 1492, Will 1495
Westwynd, Peter	Juror (Empoles)	Mariner and Brabanter	Will 1486, 1483 Alien Listing
Wymond, Richard	Juror - Empoles		

Notes - 6 of the 34 names cannot be identified further and %'s have been calculated from a base figure of 28.

By the start of the sixteenth century the defining elements of the English justice system were in place allowing disputes between elements of a community to be aired.<sup>859</sup> The plea rolls of the Court of Common Pleas provide information about private litigation between individuals asserting title to land, contractual disputes, alleged trespass as well as debt actions for amounts ranging from 40s to many thousands of pounds.<sup>860</sup> The plea rolls indexes (CP40) from this common law court relating to Easton Bawents inhabitants were examined for the period 1350-1596. From the late fifteenth century, the right of free manorial tenants to take litigation to the courts of equity increased where judgements were based on what was morally right as opposed to a legal right explored in the common law courts. The inhabitants of Easton exercised such rights, and a selection of cases presented at the Court of Chancery and Star Chamber between c.1475-c.1544 were also examined. The records of Easton Bawents residents at both the common and equity courts, provide glimpses into the litigation surfacing in the community, mainly relating to the ownership of property. By the early 1500s the equity courts were perceived to offer a route for the 'smaller' man to take on the more powerful within society and this aspect along with the tangible topographical and nominal details provided were explored.<sup>861</sup> The CP40 refs provide the name of the party involved and the index year.

Sources – Court Roll, 1485, NRA17140 Box793/11; 'CP40 Indices', University of Houston, O'Quinn Law Library, accessed 25 July 2024, [http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices/CP40Indices/CP40\\_Indices.html](http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices/CP40Indices/CP40_Indices.html); wills see Appendix 1; 'The London Customs Accounts, [Hanseatic History Association], 2016-Present).', Medieval England Maritime Project, accessed 26 February 2024, <https://memp.ace.fordham.edu/editions-of-particular-accounts/>; Alien listings, E 179/180/92 parts 1 and 2, 1440; E 179/180/111, 1483, TNA.

<sup>859</sup> Wrightson, *A Social History of England 1500-1750*, 200.

<sup>860</sup> Amor quoting Stevens. Amor, *From Wool To Cloth, The Triumph Of The Suffolk Clothier*, 9; Matthew Frank Stevens, 'Londoners and the Court of Common Pleas in the Fifteenth Century', in *London and Beyond: Essays in Honour of Derek Keene* (London: University of London, 2012), 240.

<sup>861</sup> Susan T. Moore, *Tracing Your Ancestors Through The Equity Courts* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books Ltd, n.d.), 1–2.

**Table 14 - Occupational and nationality data of Easton Bavents manorial court participants, 1532**

Court leet held Tuesday after the feast of Epiphany, 23 of Henry VIII, 1532.

Name	Manorial Position	Occupation/Nationality	Source
Amyas, Robert	Capital Pledge and Juror	Mariner	<i>Will, 1541</i>
Anderson, Thomas	Capital Pledge and Juror	Leaves bequests of fishing nets	<i>Will, 1535</i>
Biomefield, Thomas	Capital Pledge and Juror – Empoles	Leaves bequests of fishing nets	<i>Will, 1536</i>
Boldon, Henry	Capital Pledge and Juror		
Borell, John	Capital Pledge and Juror	Nominal link to Juror at Admiralty Court	<i>HCA 13/1 – f.1</i>
Burwell, Robert	Essoin – absent		
Cardy, John	Essoin – absent	Juror at Admiralty Court, 1536-7	<i>HCA 13/1 - f. 1</i>
Cardy, William	Essoin – proxy	Nominal links to Admiral Court	<i>HCA 13/1 - f. 1</i>
Chery, William	Capital Pledge and Juror – Empoles	Son of a miller and brother of juror at Admiralty Court, 1536-7	<i>Will of William Chery, 1490</i>
Cooke, John	Capital Pledge and Juror	Leaves bequests of fishing nets	<i>Will, 1553</i>
Kyngham, John	Capital Pledge and Juror		
Lawson, Cornell (Cornelius)	Capital Pledge and Juror	Master of a vessel at London, 1522, also listed as an Alien in 1524	<i>London Customs accounts, 1524 Lay Subsidy</i>
Lawson, Henry	Capital Pledge - Empoles	Mariner and juror at Admiralty Court 1536-7	<i>Will, 1544, HCA 13/1 – f.1</i>
Lee, Robert a	Capital Pledge and Juror	leaves bequests of fishing nets	<i>Will, 1533</i>
Lyske (Leske), John	Capital Pledge	Mariner	<i>Will, 1552</i>
Masse, Thomas	Capital Pledge and Juror		
Pyrse, John	Juror		
Rowle, John	Capital Pledge	Master of a vessel at London, 1521	<i>London Customs Accounts, 1521</i>
Skaler, Thomas	Capital Pledge		
Sponer, John	Juror	Juror at Admiralty Court 1536-7	<i>HCA 13/1 – f.1</i>
Underwood, Robert	Essoin – proxy		
Ussher, John	Capital Pledge	Mariner	<i>CP40, 1536</i>
Wylkynson, Robert	Capital Pledge and Juror	Juror at Admiralty Court, 1536-7	<i>HCA 13/1 - f.81</i>

Sources – Court roll, 1532, NRA 17140 Box 793/13/2 , Will appendix 1, CP40 indexes, Admiralty Court 1536-7, HCA 13/1; London Customs Accounts, various years (see Table 21).

**Table 15 – Tenants on Oath at Easton Bavents manorial court, 1531**

1531 – Tenants on Oath As listed on the survey	1531 Manorial Court entry	1524 Lay-Tax Subsidy listing for Easton Bavents
James Sponer - 'farmer' of the manor		£20 in goods
Thomas Blomfeld	Chief and Juror of Empolls	£20 in goods
William Chery	Chief and Juror of Empolls	£4 in goods
John Pyeres	Juror of Eston B	£10 in goods
John Coke	Chief of Eston B	None
Henry Lawson	Chief of Empolls	£4 in goods
Robert Lee	Chief and Juror of Eston B	£16 in goods
Cornelis Lawson	Chief and Juror of Eston B	£20 in goods – Alien
Robert Amyas	Chief and Juror of Eston B	£8 in goods
John Rowle	Chief of Eston B	£4 in goods
John Kyngham	Chief and Juror of Eston B	£2 in goods
John Burrell	Chief and Juror of Eston B	£6 in goods

Source – c.1431-1531 Survey, Court roll, NRA17140 Box 793/13/2, Sydenham Henry Augustus Hervey, *Suffolk 1524*.

**Table 16 – Names and owners of potential vessels for requisition, 1513**

Creek	Name of owner	Name of vessel	Tunnage
<b>Easton Bavents</b>	James Sponer	<i>Jamys</i>	60
	James Sponer	<i>Trinitie</i>	40
	James Sponer	<i>John</i>	30
	William Radaner	<i>Janett</i>	33
	Richard Smyth & William Sukelyngs	<i>Petyr</i>	38
	Thomas Sutton	[none listed]	
	Robert Hangken	<i>James</i>	19
<b>Covehithe</b>	William Parman	<i>Goodgrace</i>	20
	William Parman	<i>Mary</i>	40
	Reginald Clerke	[blank]	40

Source – List of vessels, E122/195/10, 1512-1513, TNA.

**Table 17 – Quantity and type of nets listed in wills of Easton Bavents testators, 1440-1600**

Date Range	Spurling	12 score or other no. score	Flewer	Great net	Not specified or other description	Will refs
<b>1440 – 1460</b>	12 + 2 m/f	14 + 1 (15 score)	5	1 m/f		Helm 1446, Mylde 1451, Cook 1453, Cooke 1456
<b>1461 – 1480</b>	4 + 1 m/f	1 m/f	1 m/f	None	2 lots, not specified	Sewale 1463, Den 1464, Cook 1465, Lacebon 1474, Crede 1476
<b>1481 – 1500</b>	10 + 5 m/f	20 + 4 m/f	9 + 4 m/f	7 + 7 m/f	1 lot not specified	Chestor 1483, Ganne 1485, Westwynd 1486, Wiseman 1486, Thompson 1487, Gesylham 1489, Franke 1491, Gardner 1491, Pumpowe 1491, Barker 1492, Cooke 1495, Childerhouse 1498, Chylderrows 1500
<b>1501 – 1520</b>	3 m/f	1 + 3 m/f + 1 (9 score)	6 m/f	8 + 9 m/f	2 m/f not specified plus 1 other lot	Emson 1505, Peys 1505, Brankaster 1510, Cornelyce 1510, Creed 1511, Rudnell 1513, Herne 1520
<b>1521 – 1540</b>	10 + 6 m/f	24 + 16 m/f	5 + 1 m/f	3 + 4 m/f	1 lot of nets not specified	Peirs 1523, Dawson 1525, Bekke 1528, Lee 1533, Alcock 1534, Anderson 1535, Blomevyle 1536, Stalys 1538
<b>1541 – 1560</b>	19 + 8 m/f	6 + 14 m/f + 2 (9 score)	19 + 7 m/f	1 m/f	2 lots not specified + 2 m/f of depset nets 2 myll of nets	Amis 1541, Lawson 1544, Stary 1550, Carding 1551, Burrell 1552, Leske 1552, Rochester 1552, Cooke 1553, Brown 1558, Leske 1558
<b>1561 – 1580</b>	None	15 (9 score)	None	None	12 mackerel nets	Appleby 1567, Benefice 1568,
<b>1581 – 1600</b>	None	None	None	None	7 mackerel nets	Catterson, 1584

**Note – m/f = Manfare** – There are differing thoughts on the meaning of the term ‘manfare’. It has been described as a ‘pair of drift nets, often (joined together) which made up an ordinary crew members contribution to the gear of the vessel on which he worked’ and also ‘a certain quantity of fishing nets’.<sup>862</sup> Due to this ambiguity no attempt has been made to arrive at a total number for the term manfare. The first instance of manfare recorded in a will was in 1446

**Spurling/Sparling net** – drift net used for catching sprats and smelts; **12 score and other score nets** – 12 twelve score nets were 240 meshes deep (about 20 feet). 15 score would have been larger and 9 score smaller at 180 meshes deep (15 feet), used for catching herring; **Flewer net** – drift net used for catching herrings; **Great net** – used for catching cod and ling in northern and Icelandic waters.<sup>863</sup>

**Source** – See Appendix 1.

<sup>862</sup> Butcher, *Rigged for River and Sea*, 122; ‘Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “manfare (n.)” July 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1405128864>.

<sup>863</sup> Butcher, 182, 200, 71, 82.

**Table 18 – Iceland fleet as listed in 1528, 1533 and c.1553**

Groupings of ports and creeks	1528 No. of vessels and % of fleet	1533 No. of vessels and % of fleet	c.1553 No. of vessels and % of fleet
London	8 – 6%	6 – 7%	0
Harwich, Ipswich, Manningtree, Dedham, Sudbury, Colchester	14 – 9.5%		4 – 10%
Orwell		7 - 8%	
Woodbridge	3 – 2%		1 – 2.5%
Orford		1 – 1%	
Aldeburgh, Sizewell, Thorpe	6 – 4%		2 – 5%
Dunwich, Walberswick, Southwold, Easton, Covehithe	32 – 21.5%	22 – 26%	8 – 20%
Lowestoft	6 – 4%	7 – 8%	2 – 5%
Yarmouth	30 – 20%	14 – 16.5%	10 – 23.5%
Clay, Blakeney, Cromer	30 – 20%		10 – 23.5%
Wells, Blakeney		17 – 20%	
Lynn (now Kings)	10 – 7%	10 – 12%	2 – 5%
Boston	4 – 3%	1 – 1%	1 – 2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>43</b>

Sources – ‘Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530, Ed. J S Brewer (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1875).’ British History Online, accessed 12 February 2024, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol4/pp2208-2254>; A certificate of the ships returned out of Iceland, 1533, SP 1/80, ff’s 59-73, TNA SP 1/80, fos. 59-73, TNA; ‘Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1601-3 With Addenda 1547-65. Edited by Mary Anne Everett Green. London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office 1870.’, British History Online, accessed 12 February 2024, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/edw-eliz/addenda/1547-65.1553>

**Table 19 - Breakdown of creek of origin for vessels of the Iceland fleet listed at Dunwich Haven, 1533**

Creek of origin	Vessel name	Portage	Owner	Master	Merchant	1524 Lay Subsidy Assessment - Owners and Merchants only
<b>Covehithe</b>	<i>Mary</i>	40	Robert Bocher	Richard Alen	Robert Bocher	£18 goods
<b>Easton</b>	<i>Trinitie</i>	50	James Sponer	Thomas Alcock	James Sponer	£20 goods plus 100 marks Ant
<b>Southwold</b>	<i>James</i>	50	Thomas Cundall	John Yarmouth (A)	Thomas Cundall	£20 goods plus 100 marks Ant
			John Yarmouth (A)		John Yarmouth (A)	£13 6s 8d goods
<b>Southwold</b>	<i>Cecile</i>	30	William Barker	Richard Sponer	William Barker	£13 6s 8d goods
<b>Southwold</b>	<i>Edmund</i>	50	William Suckinge	William Bird	William Suckinge	£20 goods plus £40 Ant
					Richard Shawynd	£3 goods
<b>Southwold</b>	<i>Nicholas</i>	40	Robert Smythe	John Becke	Robert Smythe	£18 goods
					Thomas Clerke	£10 goods
<b>Southwold</b>	<i>Katheryn</i>	30	William Crane	Vincent Rowlande	William Crane	£1 goods
			Robert Smithe		Robert Smithe	£18 goods
<b>Southwold</b>	<i>Thomas</i>	40	Thomas Holborn	Richard Parishe	Thomas Holborn	£20 goods
<b>Southwold</b>	<i>Gabriell</i>	50	Robert Beamounde (ynr)	John Studley	Robert Beamounde (ynr)	
<b>Southwold</b>	<i>Peter</i>	40	Robert Beamounde (old)	Thomas Brown	Robert Beamounde (old)	
<b>Southwold</b>	<i>Peter</i>	30	John Howlett	William Lawson	John Howlet	£4 in goods
<b>Southwold</b>	<i>Christopher</i>	30	Richard Hill	Richard Hill	Richard Hill	
			William Driver		William Driver	£15 goods
<b>Walberswick</b>	<i>Margaret</i>	35	Thomas Eldeton	Richard Alexander	Thomas Elderton	£10 goods
					William Roke	£3 goods
<b>Walberswick</b>	<i>James</i>	40	Robert Burwade	Robert Broke	Robert Burwade	£1 lands
			[blank] Pigot		[blank] Pigot	£2 lands plus £40 Ant
<b>Walberswick</b>	<i>Margery</i>	35	William Tekill/Fekett***	Thomas Harrys	William Tekill	£5 goods Wm Fekitt
<b>Southwold</b>	<i>Andrew</i>	50	Robert Boreman	John Burman	Robert Boreman	£10 goods plus 100 marks Ant
<b>Dunwich</b>	<i>Mary &amp; John</i>	30	Nicholas Baldwyn	Thomas Fresill?	Nicholas Baldwyn	£60 goods Plus £60 Ant
<b>Dunwich</b>	<i>Mawdyn</i>	30	William Girdler	Robert Girdler	William Girdler	£20 goods
					Raulf Palmer	
<b>Dunwich</b>	<i>Thomas</i>	30	Thomas Halidaye	James Redhod	Thomas Halidaye	£40 goods plus £55 Ant
					John Nicholson	£35 goods plus £40 Ant
<b>Dunwich</b>	<i>Mary Grace</i>	30	William Ichinghamme	Robert Whight	William Ichinghamme	£14 goods
<b>Dunwich</b>	<i>Katherynne</i>	30	William Rabet	William Thurlow	William Rabet	£10 goods
<b>Walberswick</b>	<i>James</i>	30	William Haram	William Haram	William Haram	
			[blank] Canson		[blank] Canson	£5 goods

Note - Ant = assessed for the Anticipation which only those of a higher ranking and worth were liable to pay; \*\*\* The original entry has both names written.

Creek names in bold are given within the original document

Creek names in Italics are assumed from the information given in 1524 re the vessel owners place of abode,

Sources - SP 1/80, fos. 59-73, 1533, TNA; Hervey, *Suffolk 1524*, 66-69, 71-73, 85-87, 91-92, 115-119, 409.

**Table 20 – Vessels from Easton, Covehithe and Southwold recorded at the port of Southampton, 1427-1436**

	<b>Easton</b>	<b>Covehithe</b>	<b>Southwold</b>
<b>Year of voyage – 1427 - 28</b>	The <i>John</i> (master John Terry)	3 named vessels	2 named vessel
<b>Cargo assessed for customs</b>	herring	red herring, spurlings	herring, spurlings
<b>Cargo on clearing the port</b>	60 quarters of rye	rye, fruit,	rye
<b>Year of voyage – 1430</b>	The <i>John</i> (master John Terry) The <i>George</i> (master John Pope)	5 named vessels	1 named vessel
<b>Cargo assessed for customs</b>	red herrings, sprats, barrels of herring	herring, malt, sprats	[entries not fully completed]
<b>Cargo on clearing the port</b>	6 barrels of osmund	A roll of beaver fur	[entries not fully completed]
<b>Year of voyage – 1436</b>	The <i>Margarite</i> (master John Mower) Merchant - Henry Clobbart/Clubbard)	2 named vessels	1 named vessel
<b>Cargo assessed for customs</b>	red herring and barrel herring	red herring, barrel herring	red herring, barrel herring
<b>Cargo on clearing the port</b>	none given	40 quarters of rye, 1 ton of iron	salt fish

Sources - Studer, Paul, ed. *The Port Books of Southampton 1427-1430*. Southampton Record Society 15. Southampton: Southampton Record Society, 1913 and Foster, Brian, ed. *The Local Port Book of Southampton for 1435-36*. Vol. VII. Southampton Records Series. Southampton: Southampton University press, 1963.

**Table 21 – Number of vessels from assigned ports at London, with dates of embarkation for voyage to Calais Staple, from Wool Customs and Subsidy Accounts, 1380-1540**

Date voyage to Calais	Kirkley	Pakefield	C/H	Easton Bawents	S/W	W/W	Dunwich	Total
<b>No recorded references prior to 1446</b>								
<b>1446 - 11 Jun</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	3
<b>1450 - 23 May</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
<b>1458 - 31 May</b>	1	0	0	0	0	3	3	7
<b>1461 - 8 Jul</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>1478 - 24 Jul</b>	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
<b>1483 - 19 Jun</b>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
<b>1488 - 10 Mar</b>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
<b>1488 - 31 Mar</b>	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	5
<b>1488 - 1 Aug</b>	1	0	1	0	2	2	3	9
<b>1490 - 20 May</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>1494 - 4 Apr</b>	5	1	0	1	0	0	0	7
<b>1494 - 10 Apr</b>	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
<b>1496 - 11 Mar</b>	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
<b>1496 - 4 May</b>	2	0	0	0	1	4	2	9
<b>1502 - 31 Mar</b>	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	5
<b>1502 - 27 Jun</b>	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	5
<b>1508 - 9 Sep</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>1510 - 20 Jun</b>	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	5
<b>1513 - 11 Mar</b>	0	1	0	0	6	1	0	8
<b>1513 - 11 Apr</b>	1	0	0	1	4	2	4	12
<b>1513 - 4 Aug</b>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
<b>1517 - 5 Apr</b>	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
<b>1517 - 13 May</b>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
<b>1518 - 13 Apr</b>	0	1	1	0	0	4	2	8
<b>1521 - 8 Apr</b>	0	0	1	1	0	3	2	7
<b>1522 - 29 Apr</b>	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
<b>1524 - 10 Apr</b>	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	3
<b>1526 - 16 Jul</b>	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>1531 - 8 Aug</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
<b>No recorded references post 1531</b>								
<b>Total</b>	14	4	5	8	23	35	27	116

Notes - C/H = Covehithe; S/W = Southwold; W/W = Walberswick

The data contains gaps – There are a few years in the custom accounts where no wool customs and subsidy accounts survive, or the designation of vessels names was not given and in some cases the documents have suffered damage and are illegible. The years where this is most prevalent are 1461-1477 and 1502-1507

**Sources – Original accounts refs – Wool customs and subsidy accounts** - E122/73/4, 26, 32, 40; E122/74/37; E122/76/40, 41; E122/78/5, 6, 8; E122/79/9, 17; E122/80/1; E122/81/11, 13; E122/82/1, 5; E122/83/3; E122/203/6; E122/204/1, 2,3,4,5, 1446-1531, TNA.

'The London Customs Accounts, Ed. Stuart Jenks, Quellen Und Darstellungen Zur Hansischen Geschichte, Neue Folge, Bd. 74 ( Lubeck: Hansischer Geschichtsverein [Hanseatic History Association], 2016-Present).', Medieval England Maritime Project, accessed 26 February 2024, <https://memp.ace.fordham.edu/editions-of-particular-accounts/>.

**Table 22 – Easton Bawents shipmasters connected with Calais wool exports, alien listings and residency**

Name of Master and/or Owner at London for Calais voyage	Alien subsidy listing or designation	Evidence of residency in Easton Bawents or area
<b>John Cornelis/Cornelyce (1488)</b>  <b>Shipowner of four vessels at death in 1510</b>	Listed in 1483 on alien subsidy at EB, from Brabant, householder (E 179/180/111 rot. 3) Exports beer as an alien merchant - 1502 (E122/80/2-3) Imports hops as an alien merchant – 1503	Acting with James Sponer as executor in Chancery case re land in Benacre and Henstead, document badly mutilated, 1486-1493, or 1504-1515. (C1/164/1) Fined at EB manorial court, 1505/6 for allowing his horse to damage his neighbour's property, fined 12d (HA30/50/22/20.9 (13)) Will of 1510, of EB, bequests of 4 vessels he owns and Iceland doles (IC/AA2/5/183)
<b>Nicholas Meeke (1494)</b>		Dead by 1502 - executors appointed for Nicholas Meek of EB re outstanding debt (CP40/959, 352)
<b>John Walsh (1494)</b>	TRANSITORY – ONLY LISTED FOR ONE YEAR AT LONDON	
<b>Henry Butte (1502)</b>	Father John Butte listed in 1440 on alien subsidy at EB, from Zeeland (E 179/180/92 Part 2 M.12)	Henry acting as executor for his father John in 1495 (CP40/931, 191) Henry in case re debt with William Mille, London ironmonger, 1502 (CP40/959, 642) Further debt case, 1505 (CP40/971, 362 and 908) Henry suing for breach of contract with Rbt Byrche, cooper of Southwold, 1526 (CP40/1049, 1028)
<b>Robert a Wode (1510)</b>		Master of vessel <i>Peter</i> of Easton at Newcastle, 1510 ( <i>The Customs Accounts of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1454-1500</i> ) Listed as master on Southwold vessel at London, 1513 (LCA) Listed on 1524 lay subsidy as of Southwold, valued on goods worth £8
<b>John a Lee (1513)</b>		Master of vessel <i>John</i> of Easton at Newcastle, 1511 ( <i>The Customs Accounts of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1454-1500</i> ) Listed on the 1524 lay subsidy at EB, valued on £3 of goods (E 179/180/171) Mentioned at EB court in 1532 as a villein tenant (NRA17140 Box 793/13/2)
<b>Cornelious Lawson (1522)</b>  <b>Assumed shipowner due to £20 worth of goods in 1524 lay subsidy listing</b>	Probably the Cornelius [blank] listed in 1483 alien subsidy at EB, from Zeeland, servant to John Frank, mariner (E 179/180/111, rot. 3) Listed in 1524 lay subsidy at EB, as alien, assessed on goods worth £20 (E 179/180/171)	Listed on the lay subsidy of 1524 (E 179/180/171) Listed as one of the 'tenants on oath' in the 1531 EB manorial survey (Survey, c.1431-1531)
<b>John Rowle (1521)</b>	Imports cheap fur lining skins as alien merchant – 1520 (E122/81/9)	Listed on the lay subsidy of 1524 at EB, valued on goods worth £4 – not given as 'alien' (E 179/180/171) Listed as one of the 'tenants on oath' in the 1531 EB manorial survey (Survey, c.1431-1531) Juror at the Suffolk Admiralty Court in 1537, of EB (HCA13/1 f.1) Will of 1540, sick in body, dwelling in Lowestoft, leaves bequests to EB church and is a vessel owner (293 Mingaye, NCC)

**Sources** – As listed, Appendix 1, LCA – see Table 21, Hervey, *Suffolk* 1524.

**Table 23 – Shipments of coal for Easton Bawents vessels listed within the Chamberlains accounts of Newcastle, 1508-1511**

	<i>Jamys/James</i> owner Robert Hanken?	<i>John</i> owner James Sponer	<i>Trinitie</i> owner James Sponer	<i>Petter</i> owner Richard Smith and Wm Suckelyng	<i>Jannett</i> owner William Radner
<b>2 Jun 1508</b>	Thomas Pawll Dep – 14 CC				
<b>7 Jun 1508</b>		William Rowd/l Dep – 20 CC			
<b>8 Aug 1508</b>	John Cree Dep – 34 CC				
<b>10 May 1509</b>		Robert Cagell Dep – 22 CC A – 4 ton of B			
<b>22 Jun 1509</b>		Robert Cagger Dep – 22 CC A - with stony			
<b>July 1509</b>		Robert Keggell Dep – 21 CC A – with stony	Richard Smyth Dep – 16 CC		
<b>10 Aug 1509</b>	Thomas Wyrlay Dep – 12 CC A – 4 ton of B				
<b>27 Apr 1510</b>	Robert Tomylden Dep – 13 CC A – 1 ton of B				
<b>11 May 1510</b>		John Cred Dep – 22 CC			
<b>28 May 1510</b>	Robert Tomyldon Dep – 13 CC				
<b>10 Jun 1510</b>	Robert Emylton Dep - 13 CC A – stony			Robert Howett Dep – 28 CC A - stony	
<b>24 Jul 1510</b>	Robert Tomyldon Dep – 13 CC				
<b>18 Aug 1510</b>				Robert Wode Dep – 28 CC	
<b>24 Aug 1510</b>			Robert Nycollson Dep – 20CC		
<b>9 May 1511</b>					John Cred Dep – 22 CC
<b>11 Jun 1511</b>					John Cred Dep – 22 CC
<b>24 Jul 1511</b>		John Lee Dep – 22 CC A – 2 ton of B			John Cred Dep – 22 CC

Note: CC = chaldrons of coal; Dep = depart; A = arrive; B = ballast; stony = stones for ballast; owner - as at 1513 vessel listing

**Source** - C.M. Fraser, ed., *The Accounts of the Chamberlains of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1508-1511* (Newcastle, 1987), pp – 4, 14, 30, 81, 96, 108, 112, 148, 151, 157, 160, 169, 176, 177, 209, 217, 234. List of vessels, E122/195/10, 1512-1513, TNA.

**Table 24 –Easton Bavents testamentary bequests, 1376-1541, specifically financing building projects and repairs to the fabric of the church of St Nicholas**

Date	Description of bequest	Amount pledged	Testator
1376	Emendation of the image of St Nicholas	10s	Sir Wm. Mildenhall
1446	Paving of that part of the church where my body shall lie	20s	Katrine Wolman
1465	For the repair of bells	6s 8d	Simon Cook
1473	To making a vice (spiral staircase) in the tower	20s	Henry Barker
1473	To the making of a candle-bearer called a candle beam	20s	John Cook, snr.
1474	Candlestick and crucifix	From his goods	Thomas Lacebon
1486	To the painting of St Nicholas	3s 4d	Margery Butt
1486	To the painting of St Nicholas	26s 8d	Peter Westwynd
1486	To the painting of the rood loft	20s	Peter Westwynd
1487	To the painting of St Nicholas	A combe of salt	Richard Thomson
1500	To make an image of St Barbara to stand in the wall of the church by St Margaret	From his goods	John Chylderows
1528	Making of a cross of silver and gilt with Marie and John	£22	Downy Bekk
1528	The making of the font	6s 8d	Robert Hawkins
1537	All the windows of the south side of the said church, extending from the vestry to the porch, that be 'indyspeier' (in disrepair) shall be made new and glazed after and like the same proper scantling that they be	From his goods	James Sponer
1444-1541	At least a further 20 bequests of money towards the 'fabric' and 'reparacions' of the church	£33 14s 9d	John Helm, Katrine Wolman, Richard Clubbard, John Mylde, Henry Clubbard, Edward Cok, John Sewale, John Den, Richard Styroppe, William Smyth, Thomas Bosham, Joan Chylderows, William Boswell, Sir Thomas Osberne, Eliz Peers, John Cornelyce, Robert Rudnall, Robert Hawkyns, Thomas Blomevyle, Robert Amis

Source – See Will Appendix 1.

**Table 25 - Easton Bavents testamentary bequests, 1456 -1510, detailing bequests to the guild of Our Lady/Blessed St Mary**

Date	Description of bequest	Amount pledged	Testator
1456	To found a gild in the said town of Easton and to ordain a priest	10 marks	Robert Brygges
1473	To the gild of Easton Bavents	13s 4d	Agnes Bryggs
1474	For the gild of Eston	40s	John Gardner
1479	For the gild of St Mary	6s 8d	William Smyth
1483	The gild of Blessed Mary	3s 4d	Halbutus Martyn (son/snr)
1485	The gild of Our Lady	Great brass pot & basin	Katrine Ganne
1486	To her lady's gild	20s	Peter Westwynd
1499	The gild of St Mary	20s	William Bosewell
1505	A gild priest - for four years	10s a year	Walter Piers
1508	To our lady's gild of Easton	10s	Elizabeth Peers
1510	To gild of Our lady	20s	John Cornelyce

Source – See Will appendix 1.

**Table 26 – Crude population totals and trends, 1603-1674**

	1603 Ecclesiastical Return est. total population	1638 Able Men - base figure	1638 Able Men – est. total population	1674 Hearth Tax - base figure	1674 Hearth Tax est. total population	% Change - 1603 - 1674
<b>Benacre</b>	190		Blank in the original	41	194	2% increase
<b>Kessingland</b>	285		no returns for Mutford hundred	53	250	12% decrease
<b>Covehithe</b>	308	39	137	39	184	40% decrease
<b>South Cove</b>	130	25	88	18	85	35% decrease
<b>Easton Bavents</b>	109	11	39	8	38	65% decrease
<b>Reydon</b>	no return	37	130	24	134	<b>1524-1674 17% decrease</b>
<b>Southwold</b>	no return		no return	200 <sup>864</sup>	945	<b>1524-1674 66% increase</b>
<b>English population trends<sup>865</sup></b>						1606-1676 18% increase
<b>Equation used - Goose and Hinde</b>	Multiplier of 1.54 for 35% undercount and then again x 1.54 for 35% underage	Multiplier of 1.75 to allow for 43% undercount of those under 16 and over 60 then double for women	Multiplier of 1.05 for a 5% undercount - then a 4.5 household multiplier			

Sources - Alan Dyer and D. M. Palliser, eds., *The Diocesan Population Returns For 1563 and 1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Charles Edward Banks, *Able Men of Suffolk, 1638*, vol. 1, Publication of the Anglo-American Records Foundation Inc. (Boston: Calkins Press, 1931); Sydenham Henry Augustus Hervey, *Suffolk 1674*, Suffolk Green Books, XI (Woodbridge: George Booth, 1905); Nigel Goose and Andrew Hinde, 'Estimating Local Population Sizes at Fixed Points in Time: Part II - Specific Sources', *Local Population Studies* 78 (2007); Stephen Broadberry, Bruce M.S. Campbell; E. A. Wrigley and Roger Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction*, 1st pbk. ed., with new introd. (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>864</sup> 15 empty houses are also recorded for Southwold and have not been included in the calculation

<sup>865</sup> The table of quinquennial English population totals calculated by Wrigley & Schofield do not coincide with the dates selected in the table above. The date spans used for comparison are 1541-1606, 1606-1676. Wrigley and Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871*, 208-9.

**Table 27 – Tax assessment for ‘Two Subsidies Grant’, 1641**

Parish	Amount of tax assessed £.s.d.	Amount of tax assessed in pence only	% of tax assessed (all 6 parishes)	% of tax assessed, Lay Subsidy 1598 (Easton, Covehithe and Southwold only)	% of tax assessed, 1641 (Easton, Covehithe and Southwold only)
<b>Benacre</b>	£16 10s 11d	3971d	16%		
<b>Covehithe</b>	£9 11s 9d	2301d	9%	13%	18%
<b>South Cove</b>	£16 10s 11d	3971d	16%		
<b>Easton Bavents</b>	£3 5s 4d	784d	3%	4%	6%
<b>Reydon</b>	£16 0s 0d	3840d	16%		
<b>Southwold</b>	£40 0s 0d	9600d	40%	83%	76%
<b>Total</b>	£101 18s 11d	24,467d	100%		

Source - Two subsidies grant, E 179/183/550 pt. 2, 1641, TNA; 1641 Subsidy list, transcript, HD11/1/4291/10.14, n.d., V. Redstone, SA.

**Table 28 – Comparison of percentage of Hearth Tax listings, 1674**

1674 – Hearth Tax listings	% & (no.) of 6-20 hearth households - gentry & large farmers	% & (no.) of 3-5 hearth households - yeomen, wealth craftsmen	% & (no.) of 2 hearth households- husbandmen, craftsmen	% & (no.) of 1 hearth & excused households- labourers, poor craftsmen, widows & excused	total number of households
<b>Kessingland</b>	4% (2)	25% (13)	11% (6)	60% (32)	53
<b>Benacre</b>	(1?)	(5?)	(11?)	32% (13)	41
<b>Covehithe</b>	0% (0)	17.5% (7)	20% (8)	62.5% (25)	40
<b>South Cove</b>	6% (1)	33% (6)	50% (9)	11% (2)	18
<b>Easton Bavents</b>	0% (0)	25% (2)	12.5% (1)	62.5% (5)	8
<b>Reydon</b>	4% (1)	62% (15)	17% (4)	17% (4)	24
<b>Southwold</b>	3.3% (7)	18% (39)	36.3% (78)	42.3% (91)	215

Note - 11 households at the beginning of the Benacre return are not complete with names of householders and details of hearths missing, presumed damaged in the original. The larger hearths within a parish are generally listed at the beginning of the returns.

Sources - Sydenham Henry Augustus Hervey, *Suffolk 1674*, Suffolk Green Books, XI (Woodbridge: George Booth, 1905). Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village*, 35

**Table 29 - Occupational status, 1641 taxation status and place of abode data of manorial court participants, 1641-1643**

Name	1641/1643 Manorial Position	1641 Subsidy listing	1638 Able Men listing – EB or elsewhere	Other detail
<b>Benefice, John</b>	C P & Juror, 1641	Taxed at 13s 5d for land NOT in his occupation		Of Southwold, Merchant, bequeathed salt houses in Southwold & other property in London. Also lands in Easton Bavents Will, 1654 – PROB 11/227/420
<b>Berry, John</b>	C P & Juror, 1641	Taxed at 5d on stock only Occupied land taxed at 1s 1d	Nominal link to EB Able Men listing 1638 (son?)	Will, 1645 – admin only – Appendix 1
<b>Betts, Robert</b>	C P & Juror, 1643			Will, 1645 – admin only – Appendix 1.
<b>Hadnam (Hadenham), Thomas</b>	C P & Juror, 1643	Taxed at 3d on stock Occupied land taxed at 11d	Nominal links to Hadnam family – Reydon Able Men	
<b>Ireland, Godfrey</b>	C P & Juror, 1641 & 1643	Taxed at 2s 7d on stock Occupied land taxed at 17s 10d	EB Able Men listing 1638	Yeoman of Southwold at death. Bequeathed land in Easton Bavents Will, 1654 – PROB 11/247/483
<b>Jelians (Julians), Edmund</b>	C P & Juror, 1641 & 1643	Taxed at 1s 8d on stock Occupied land taxed at 13s 5d	EB Able Men listing 1638	
<b>Mowser, Henry</b>	C P & Juror, 1641		Nominal links to Mowser family – Reydon Able Men	
<b>Mowser, William</b>	Ch P & Juror, 1643	Taxed at 11d on land	Nominal links to Mowser family – Reydon Able Men	
<b>Pidgeon, Christopher</b>	C P & Juror, 1641 & 1643	Taxed at 1s 1d on stock Occupied land taxed at 11s 1d Occupied land taxed at 7d	EB Able Men listing 1638	
<b>Pidgeon, John</b>	C P & Juror, 1641	Taxed at 5d on land NOT in his occupation		Yeoman, of Southwold at death. Brother of Christopher Pidgeon, above Will, 1649 – nuncupative – IC/AA1/87/116
<b>Seaman (Semon), John</b>	C P & Juror, 1641 & 1643	Taxed at 5d on stock Taxed at 7d on land he occupied Occupied land taxed at 1s 4d	EB Able Man listing 1638	of Northales at death Will, 1663 -nuncupative – IC/AA1/93/81

Note – C P = Capital Pledge, EB = Easton Bavents

Sources – Court book, 1641-1689, 1309:17079/Gooch/4/365 (uncatalogued), SA; Two subsidies grant, E 179/183/550 pt. 2, 1641, TNA; 1641 Subsidy list, transcript, HD11/1/4291/10.14, n.d., V. Redstone, SA; Banks, Charles Edward. *Able Men of Suffolk, 1638: Transcribed from the Original in the Public Record Office, London, English, in the State Papers Domestic, Charles I, Vol. 411. Vol. 1.* Publication of the Anglo-American Records Foundation Inc. Boston: Calkins Press, 1931.

## **Appendix 5 – Chronology of the naming of the settlements of Northales and Covehithe**

Northales was the name for the original settlement to the north of Easton Bavents, recorded in Domesday as *Norhals/Nordhalla*, which was located around the church of St Andrew.<sup>866</sup> There was also an early settlement at Cove, just to the west of the Easton Bavents. A maritime settlement called Covehithe developed at the ‘hithe’ at the haven lying between Easton and Northales at some point post c.1330. It has traditionally been stated that it was named after the family who took the name of Cove and were manorial lords of Northales in the fourteenth century. The manorial accounts for Easton Bavents from 1357 start to record annual receipts from tolls of the ‘Hythe’ (hithe), which must relate to trade at the market and the port of Easton. It is known that the manor of Easton held land in Northales, and a Geoffrey de Cove was associated with Easton and not Northales in 1327 and c.1340s. Therefore, references to the ‘Hythe’ possibly relate to the hithe being physically located on the Northales side of the haven, on land which was part of the manor of Easton although there is no confirmation of this within the accounts.<sup>867</sup>

There is no clear-cut date when the settlements of Northales and Covehithe became one and the same entity. Difficulties regarding dating emerge from the indexing of early documents and the use of the latter name of Covehithe being applied without further information given. In many cases the name given within an index for the settlement is Covehithe, whereas when the original document is consulted it is clear that the name Northales (or variant) was given. One clear example of this is on the E179 TNA database of records relating to lay and clerical taxation.<sup>868</sup> The name of Covehithe is given on the database but the original document of 1329 gave the settlement as Northales.<sup>869</sup>

The date of the earliest extant manorial records for the manor of North Hales are from 1386, and in 1408 these describe the manor as North Hales with Cove and in 1547

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<sup>866</sup> Williams and Martin, *Little Domesday Book*.

<sup>867</sup> Annual receipts for fixed assize rents are recorded from Northales. Hythe is spelt ‘dil Hethe’ (1356-7), ‘le Heythe’ (1376-7), ‘Hythe’ (1377-8). V5/19/1/1.4-1.7.

<sup>868</sup> ‘The National Archives, E179, Home Page’, The National Archives, accessed 29 November 2021, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/e179/>.

<sup>869</sup> 1327 Lay subsidy, 1329, E179/180/6, rot 10d.

as North Hales alias Covehithe.<sup>870</sup> No record exists of a separate manor of Covehithe, only Cove (now known as South Cove).<sup>871</sup>

The antiquarian writings of David Elisha Davy, Copinger and Browne contain no further validated information.<sup>872</sup>

A search of the extant wills for the settlements of Northales and Covehithe provide further information although it must be remembered that this information relies on the indexing terms used when the wills were calendared. It has not been possible to check each will to confirm the name of the place of settlement of the testator. Wills survive from 1397 and the earliest one indexed as 'of Covehithe' is dated 1422.<sup>873</sup>

Between 1401 and 1650 there are 485 extant wills and of these only 77 are given as of Covehithe, 6 state Northales alias Covehithe and 402 give as of Northales. Between 1651 and 1700, of the 32 wills, 18 give as of Covehithe and only 13 as of Northales with one giving both parishes.<sup>874</sup> This would appear to indicate that using the term of Covehithe for the merged settlements was not universally popular until post 1650.

Further in-depth research outside the remit of this thesis is required to be able to plot the exact locations, dating and amalgamation, of the two settlements along with their naming conventions.

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<sup>870</sup> V5/19/2/1, 3, 10.

<sup>871</sup> The National Archives, 'The Manorial Documents Register' (The National Archives), accessed 22 August 2024, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/manor-search>.

<sup>872</sup> The Davy Manuscripts, see North Ales (sic) Add MS 19080, BL; Copinger, *Manors of Suffolk, Blything*; John Browne, *The History and Antiquities of Covehithe* (Lowestoft: Powell and Co., n.d.).

<sup>873</sup> Will of John Berbrundstede, 1422, Hirning 12, NCC.

<sup>874</sup> As listed via a search of online indexed wills of Covehithe and Northales from the TNA, Suffolk Archives and the Norfolk Record Office. The National Archives, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>, accessed 28/07/2024; Suffolk Archives, <https://www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/>, accessed 28/07/2024; Norfolk Record Office, <https://www.archives.norfolk.gov.uk/>, accessed 28/07/2024;

## Appendix 6 – Timeline of important events pertinent to Easton Bawents

Date	Event
700,000 BCE	Evidence of early hominids at Pakefield
500,000 BCE	Britain connected to the European continent
478,000-424,000 BCE	Ice covering Suffolk melted and formed river valleys including those at Easton
10,000-6,000 BCE	Land bridge between Britain and Europe disappeared
8,300-4,500 BCE	Evidence of Mesolithic people at Easton from finds in the ancient river bed between North and South cliffs
4,500-2,500 BCE	Neolithic finds of this date uncovered when North cliff first ploughed in the 1960s
2,000 BCE	Date of ox-rib carving found in old Easton river bed
700 BCE-43 CE	Evidence of Iron-Age settlement in the area
43-410 CE	Evidence of Roman finds in the area, more believed to have been lost to erosion
775-892	Anglo-Saxon dug-out boat discovered in sea off Easton and Covehithe
870-900	Viking side rudders found at the site of the old Easton river bed and radio carbon dated. Evidence of Easton river being navigable
1066	Domesday evidence of a port at Frostenden confirms Easton river navigable. Population of nucleated settlement est. at 64
1086	Domesday evidence of loss of Frostenden port and salt pans at Easton suggests changes occurring at Easton river estuary
1135-1141	Church given as gift to Thetford Priory
1190	Sailing directions describe a ness at Kirkley and a sandbank called Edelwaldese lying off Easton
1236-7	Body of water called Southmere lying at boundary of Easton and Northales. Evidence of water and marsh at the blocked Easton river estuary
1256	Boundary dispute between Southwold and Easton suggests further evidence of changing topography
1275	Earliest court roll records the manor owned by the de Bawent family who died out after the Black Death of 1349

1280s-1290s	Major storms affect sections of the Suffolk coastline with large land losses and flooding recorded at Dunwich
1298 and 1330	Market and fair grants suggest positive economic conditions resulting from changes to the coastline at Northales and Easton
1306	Parishioners involved in sea fishing
1328	Further major storms affect the east coast
1327	Population estimated at 306
1327	Economic wealth relatively poor
1330	Market charter records the first use of the suffix of Bawent added to Easton
1342	Nonarum Inquisitiones suggest no land loss at Easton but there is evidence of land losses at other coastal parishes in the vicinity
1357	Ships are recorded visiting the 'Hythe'
1376	Manor in the hands of Sir Richard Cossyn who dies in 1392
1376	First explicit mention of the dedication of St Nicholas for the parish church
1376	Earliest recorded reference to the chapel of St Margaret, annexed to the church of St Nicholas
1390s	Manor now known as the manor of Easton Bawents with Enepolys (Empoles) and in the hands of the Shardelow family
c.1392	Birth of Osbern Bokenham possibly at Easton or in the near vicinity
1395	Larger ships recorded visiting the haven and smaller boats at the mere
1426/27	The townspeople petition the abbot of Sibton to be allowed to build a separate chapel dedicated to St Margaret near to the new maritime community at the haven
1428	Earliest recorded vessel 'of Easton', trading at Southampton
1431	Date of an incomplete manorial survey, at least 105 separate parcels of property and land are listed
1435	Manor leased by John Hopton, who purchases the manor from Ella Shardelow in 1451
1438-1544	Vessels 'of Easton' recorded as requisitioned by the crown

1440	24 alien immigrants recorded. Cluster of immigrants in surrounding parishes
1440-1584	Wills record evidence of varying types of fishing nets and therefore various types of fishing being carried on
1450s-1490s	A network of enlightened clergy can be found at Easton and in coastal parishes in the close vicinity educating the sons of the wealthy and also interested in the new science of navigation
1450s	Manorial records record a buoyant and bustling community with incomers buying land and property
1456	Money left to found a guild and ordain a priest
1460s-1470s	Harbour is dredged when necessary
1465	Start of a period of refurbishments to the church of St Nicholas
1465	New boundaries marked out between Easton and Covehithe
c.1470	Sandbank recorded lying off the coast at Easton
1471-1509	Chapel dedicated to St Margaret is a focus of local pilgrimages with associations to Osbern Bokenham
1483	15 immigrants, many of them mariners recorded
1485	High proportion of trading mariners and immigrants hold manorial court roles. Evidence of entrepreneurial shipmen and merchants
1488-1521	Evidence of the trading of wool and woolfells from Port of London to the Staple at Calais of men and vessels 'of Easton'
c.1490s	Easton reached its population and economic zenith
1508-1552	Evidence of trading and fishing voyages of men and vessels 'of Easton' to Iceland
1508-1511	Evidence of coal trade of men and vessels 'of Easton' with Newcastle
1510	Last recorded will bequest to the guild of St Mary/Our Lady
1518	Last recorded will bequest to the chapel of St Margaret
1524	Population estimated at 324, includes 8 immigrants. The rise from 1327 rate bucks the national and regional trends
1524	A high percentage of higher rate taxpayers and also a high percentage of lower tax payers are evident

1531	Manorial survey records evidence of the chapel of St Margaret, church of St Nicholas, mere and a haven between Easton and Covehithe
1532	Percentage of mariners and immigrants holding manorial court positions have declined and signs of decay are evident
1537	Evidence that the church windows are in disrepair indicating declining fortunes
1539	Defence chart illustrates the Barnard sandbank protecting Easton Ness
1541	Last will bequest made to the high altar indicating changing religious beliefs
1547 and 1552/3	Severe storms affect the east coast
1547	Church plate sold and monies used to repair the quay and to safe guard the marshes
1548	First recorded bequest to the poor man's box indicting changing ways of providing charity and relief
1554-1569	Gerardus Mercator's world atlas illustrates the importance of Easton Ness as a navigational reference point
1560s	Mariners and fishermen from Easton pressed into Crown service
1560s-1570s	Maps illustrate the movement of the Barnard sandbank leaving Easton Ness exposed
1568	Economically in great decline
1570	Severe storms affect the east coast
1572	Last recorded date of a vessel given as 'of Easton', on a voyage to Hull
1575	Saxton's map shows a 'tadpole' shaped area of enclosed water between Easton and Covehithe. This is the flooded Easton river valley. The river no longer flows out to sea, later called the 'myle meare'
1584	Richard Poulter's chart shows the movement of the Barnard sandbank to the north and the ness has shrunk in size
1586	Camden in his <i>Britannia</i> records 'Easton, a village of fishermen well neare eaten up by the sea'
1587	Last recorded request for burial in the churchyard at St Nicholas

1588	Woods End Creek at the boundary between Easton and Southwold not open to the sea
1590	Cut made at the shingle bank between Dunwich and Southwold to re-position the Blyth estuary after dynamic changes to the coastline
c.1590	Assumed date of the loss or ruination of the church of St Nicholas
1596	First surviving record of burial of an Easton resident within another churchyard
1597	Manor in the hands of Dorothy Roberds (nee Hopton) when she marries Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey
1598	Land values have decreased
1598	Record of the congregation worshiping in a chapel in the parish – probably a converted barn building
1603	Population estimated at 109, a severe decline from 1524. Plague was rife in the area with catastrophic consequences for Easton
1605	Mutilated map of the manor of Northales records the presence of the 'tadpole' water lying between Covehithe and Easton
1607	Robert Selby, a Calvinist preacher with strong puritan links and part of the emerging nonconformist element is instituted to the incumbency of Easton
1609	Evidence of extensive flooding in coastal north-east Suffolk
1610	The 'broade water' recorded within Covehithe burial register
1622-1638	Series of marriage licences, for couples not normally resident at Easton, issued for couples to marry at the chapel at Easton Bavents
1638	The Able Men of Suffolk muster records an estimated population of 39, a further drastic reduction from 1603
1638-1646	The chapel at Easton ceased to exist
1641	Land recorded as in the ownership of a few wealthy individuals who do not live in the parish
1641	Manorial court records record only 1 person listed with a maritime connection - to salt houses at Southwold
c.1650	1000 acres of water and marshes lies 'improvable' between the manors of Covehithe and Easton Bavents

c.1650      Manor purchased by Jeffrey Howland of Streatham with a view to drain and improve the land

1664      Government Commission lists extensive areas of derelict land and salt marshes at Blythburgh, Walberswick and Covehithe and Easton. No improvements taking place

1674      Heath tax list records an estimated population of 38 with only 7 households left in the parish

1695      Elizabeth Howland, aged c.14, daughter of John Howland, son of Jeffrey, married Wriothesley Russell, the future Duke of Bedford and takes the manor of Easton with her to the marriage

1713      Only 2 properties, one of them a farmhouse remain in the parish

1754      Thomas Gardner, antiquarian, records his history of Easton Bavents

## Appendix 7 – Vessels designated as of Easton Bavents, 1427-1572

Year	Vessel name and type where known	In what capacity mentioned	Owner/s (O), Skipper (S) and/or master (M)	Tunn age	Ref
1427-1428 & 1430	<i>John</i>	Southampton customs	Terry, John (M)		PBS, 1427-1430, 1435-36
1430 & 1438	<i>George</i>	Southampton customs & voyage to Poole	Pope, John (M)	30	PBS, 1435-36; E 101/53/24 m.2, TNA
1436	<i>Margu[er]ite</i>	Southampton customs	Mower, John (M)		PBS, 1435-36
1444	Ship (part of)	at present in King's Service (out of the country)	Helm, John & Buschop, John, of Southwold (O)		Will of John Helm, 1444
1446	Manicule (part of)	given to Roger Pumewe	Wolleman, Katherine (O)		Will of Katherine Wolleman, 1446
1452	Ballinger	being pumped out	Hopton, John (O)		JH, p.145
1456	<i>Katryn</i>	Payment of part of debt	Cooke, John (O)		Will of John Cooke, 1456
1464-1465	Lords boat	on the mere	Hopton, John (O)		JH, p87
1469	<i>George</i>	being wafted by Howard	Peces, John (O)		HHB, p.xxxvi
1469	<i>Jenet</i>	being wafted by Howard	Barber, Harry (O)		HHB, p.xxxvi
1469	<i>Mary</i>	being wafted by Howard	Couper, William (O)		HHB, p.xxxvi
1471/2	2 un-named vessels	Great Yarmouth Customs Accounts	Peter Westwynde and John Butte		Y/C 4/176, NRO
1487	<i>Phylyppe</i>	mentioned in Walberswick Churchwardens accounts			FC185/E1/1
1488	<i>Nycholas</i>	London Customs	Cornelis, John (S)		LCA, 1488
1491	Boat	left to wife Agnes	Frank, John (O)		Will of John Frank
1494	<i>Kateryn</i>	London Customs	Meeke, Nicholas (S)		LCA, 1488
1494	<i>Trynyte</i>	London Customs	Walsshe, John (S)		LCA, 1488
1497	<i>Christopher</i>	Scottish wars			ERC, Dunwich, p.5-6
1502	<i>Kateryn</i>	London Customs	Butte, Henry (S)		LCA, 1488
1505	<i>Elizabeth, boat</i>	left to wife Elizabeth	Peyrs, John (O)		Will of John Peyrs, 1505
1505	<i>Peter, ship</i>	half to his wife Elizabeth	Peyrs, John (O)		Will of John Peyrs, 1505
1505	other ships and boats	not yet bequeathed	Peyrs, John (O)		Will of John Peyrs, 1505

1508	<i>Jamys</i>		Pawll, Thomas (M)		NCA, p.4
1508	<i>Jamys</i>		Cree, John (M)		NCA, p.30
1508	Ship, possibly <i>Peter</i> or <i>Elizabeth</i> (half of)				Will of Elizabeth Peers, 1508
1509	<i>Jamys</i>		Wyrly, Thomas (M)		NCA, p.112
1509	<i>John</i>		Cagell/Cagger/Keggell, Robert (M)		NCA, p.81, 96, 108
1509	<i>Trinite</i>		Smyth, Richard (M)		NCA, p.108, 148, 157, 169
1510	<i>James</i>		Tomylden/Emylton, Robert (M)		NCA, p.148
1510	<i>John</i>		Cred, John (M)		NCA, p.151
1510	<i>Petrus/Petter</i>	London Customs	a Wode, Robert (S)		LCA, 1510; NCA, p.176
1510	<i>Petter</i>		Howett, Robert (M)		NCA, p.160
1510	<i>Trinite</i>		Nycollson, Robert (M)		NCA, p.177
1510	Ship	to be sold	Cornelyce, John (O)		Will of John Cornelyce, 1510
1510	Best boat	given to son Nicholas Cornelyce	Cornelyce, John (O)		Will of John Cornelyce, 1510
1510	Second best boat	given to wife	Cornelyce, John (O)		Will of John Cornelyce, 1510
1510	Ship (possibly the <i>Peter</i> )	to be sold to Rychard Smyth	Cornelyce, John (O)		Will of John Cornelyce, 1510
1511	<i>Jennett</i>		Erde/Cred John (M)		NCA, p.209, 217, 234
1513	unknown	Yarmouth list for requisition	Critton, Thomas (O)		E 122/195/10, TNA
1513	<i>James</i>	Yarmouth list for requisition	Haughken, Robert (O)	19	E 122/195/10, TNA
1513	<i>James</i>	Yarmouth list for requisition & again for requisition	Sponer, James (O)	60	SP 1/229 (seq no. 0207); E 122/195/10, TNA
1513	<i>Janett</i>	Yarmouth list for requisition	Rad?, William (O)	33	E 122/195/10, TNA
1513	<i>John</i>	London Customs	a Lee, John (S)		LCA, 1513
1513	<i>John</i>	Yarmouth list for requisition	Sponer, James (O)	30	E 122/195/10, TNA
1513	<i>Peter</i>	Requisition by Keby & Burwell & Yarmouth list for requisition?	Smyth, Richard Williamson William (O)	40 (crew of 8) & 38	SP 1/229 (seq no. 0201); E 122/195/10, TNA
1513	<i>Trinitie</i>	Yarmouth list for requisition? & Requisition by Keby & Burwell	Sponer, James Williamson, William (of Southwold) (O)	40 & 60 (crew of 8)	E 122/195/10: SP 1/229 (seq no. 0201), TNA
1521	<i>Trinitas/Trinitie</i>	London Customs	Rowle, John (S)		LCA, 1521

1522	<i>Jacobus/James</i>	London Customs	Lawson, Cornelius (S)		LCA, 1521
1528	<i>Blythe</i> , boat	left to Joan Thomas	Bekke, Downey (O)		Will of Downey Bekke, 1528
1528	<i>Marie and John</i>	ship (half pt) to Richard Sponer	Bekke, Downey (O)		Will of Downey Bekke, 1528
1528	Great boat	left to nephew Davy Bekk in will	Bekke, Downey (O)		Will of Downey Bekke, 1528
1533	<i>Trinitie</i>	Iceland fleet at Dunwich haven	Sponer, James (O)	50	SP 1/80, TNA
1536-37	Boat	Admiralty Court mention	Amys, Robert (O)		HCA 13/1 f.82, TNA
1538	Boat	given to John Rowle (father to Stalys)	Rowle, John (O)		Will of Thomas Stalys, 1538
1541	<i>Margarett</i> , fisher	listed in will	Amys, Robert (O)		Will of Robert Amys, 1541
1541	Boat	owned with John Cardye	Amys, Robert (O)		Will of Robert Amys, 1541
1544	<i>Harry</i> , double carvel	all board and plank to build it given in his will to town of Easton	Lawson, Henry (O)		Will of Henry Lawson, 1544
1550	Unknown, collier	Given to son Robert in will	Stary, Robert (O)		Will of Robert Stary, 1550
1550	Boat (half of)	In Iceland and given to Adam Blowese of Southwold and half to wife in will	Stary, Robert (O)		Will of Robert Stary, 1550
1552	<i>Martyn</i> , boat	In Iceland given to wife in will	Leske, John (O)		Will of John Leske, 1552
1552	Ship	given to Richard Gooche and Robert Buryell in will	Burrell, Edward (O)		Will of Edward Burrell, 1552
1552	Boat	given to Richard Gooche and Robert Buryell in will	Burrell, Edward (O)		Will of Edward Burrell, 1552
1552	Boat	given to George Smythe in will	Leske, John (O)		Will of John Leske, 1552
1558	Boat (half of)	Owned with Richard Brown, given in will	Brown, Thomas (O)		Will of Thomas Brown, 1558
1565	Unknown	Listed in Elizabethan shipping survey		34	NW p.218
1567	Fisher (half of)	Given in in will	Appleby, Henry (O)		Will of Henry Appleby, 1567

1568	Crayer	Listed in will	Benefyce, John (O)		Will of John Benefyce, 1568
1569	<i>Marie</i>	Merchant vessel	Foster, Thomas (M)	16	E 190/814/7 f.1v, TNA
1572	George	Voyage to Hull	Harrison, Robert (M)	30	E 190/306/10 f.12r, TNA

Notes – PBS = Paul Studer, ed., *The Port Books of Southampton 1427-1430*, Southampton Record Society 15 (Southampton: Southampton Record Society, 1913); Brian Foster, ed., *The Local Port Book of Southampton for 1435-36*, vol. VII, Southampton Records Series (Southampton: Southampton University press, 1963); JH = Colin Richmon, *John Hopton: A Fifteenth Century Gentleman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); HHB = Anne Crawford, ed., *The Household Books of John Howard, Duke of Norfolk, 1462-1471, 1481-1483* (Stroud: Paul Watkins Publishing, 1992); ERC = Ernest Read Cooper, *Memories of Bygone Dunwich*, 2nd ed. (Southwold: Suffolk Press, 1948); NCA = C.M. Fraser, ed., *The Accounts of the Chamberlains of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1508-1511*, Record Series (Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne) 3 (Newcastle: Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1987); LCA = ‘The London Customs ( Lubeck: Hansischer Geschichtsverein [Hanseatic History Association], 2016-Present).’, Medieval England Maritime Project, accessed 26 February 2024, <https://memp.ace.fordham.edu/editions-of-particular-accounts/>; NW = Neville Williams, *The Maritime Trade of the East Anglian Ports, 1550-1590*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

From the 69 listings, there are 17 separate vessel names given, with a potential of 24 named vessels listed. Between 1427 and 1572 there are at least 50 distinct references to different vessels given as ‘of Easton Bavents’

The names chosen for the vessels have religious connotations, mainly saints names, or as in the case of the Trinity and Jennet, God and Christ being alluded to indirectly. The names would have been given with the hope the crews and cargos would be given protection. However, the Elizabeth in 1505 was probably named after the owners wife, the Blythe in 1528 after the local river and the Harry in 1544 must allude to King Henry VIII.

Sources – See Will Appendix 1 and others as listed

**Appendix 8 - Clergy and chaplains of Easton Bavents as listed in institution registers and elsewhere, 1306-1666**

Name	Date	Institution detail	Diocese of Norwich, Institution date	Patron	Other detail and refs
Bavent, Henry, rector	1306				Bond, 1306 Ref - HB26/412/724, SA
Ingelose, Reginald de, of Lodne (Loddon, Nfk)	1321	church of EB	1321 (4 Jun) DN/Reg 1 bk 1 - Salmon 1299-1325, f.91r	Bavent, Thomas, Knt.	
Ingelose, William	1325	church of EB	1325 (24 Jun) DN/Reg 1 bk 1 - Salmon 1299-1325, f.117r	Bavent, Thomas, Knt.	
Deneys, Symon, priest	1344	rectory/parish church of EB *	1344 (27 Apr) DN/Reg 2 bk 4 - Bateman 1343-1355, f.42	Bavent, William	
Tyd, Simon de	1349	rectory/parish church of EB *	1349 (4 May) DN/Reg 2 bk 4 - Bateman 1343-1355, f.78	Bavent, William	
Malyn, William	1349	rectory/parish church of EB *	1349 (11 Jun) DN/Reg 2 bk 4 - Bateman 1343-1355, f.83	Bavent, William	
Godwyn, John	1361	rectory/parish church of EB *	1361 (13 Jul) DN/Reg 2 bk 5 - Percy 1355-1369, f.45	Argentein, John, Knt.	
Caldecote, William de	1361	church of EB	1361 (22 Oct) DN/Reg 2 bk 5 - Percy 1355-1369, f.54	Argentein, John, Knt.	
Mildenhall, William de	1376	Easton Bavents			1376, will of William de Mildenhall, rector of EB - describes Sir William ? (Caldecote?) as parish chaplain. Ref - Heydon 133, 134, NCC
Brytholm Roger of Ocle (Acle Nfk)	1376-1392	parish church of EB with the chapel of St Margaret (annexed to)	1376 (18 Dec) DN/Reg 3 bk 6 - Despencer 1370-1406, f.49	Cosyn, Richard	1383, will of Margaret Argentein mentions Sir Roger?, parson of EB. Ref - Heydon 219, NCC 1392, will of Roger Brightelm of EB, rector Ref - Harsyk 173, NCC
Wace, John of Benyngham	1392-1427	parish church of St Nicholas of EB with chapel of St Margaret (annexed to)	1392 (22 Feb) DN/Reg 3 bk 6 - Despencer 1370-1406, f.172	Schardelow, Robert, son of John Schardelow, Knt.	Also vicar of Finchingfield, Essex, 1405 South Weald, Essex, 1405 Ref - Ref - <a href="https://venn.lib.cam.ac">https://venn.lib.cam.ac</a> 1427, Admin of John Wace of EB, rector Ref - Hirning 23, admin only, NCC
Edward, John	1415				parish chaplain of EB in debt case Ref - CP40/618 ref, 661
Wetherle, John	1418				parish chaplain of EB in debt case Ref - CP40/629 ref, 90

Byrd, Andrew	1427- 1438	parish church of EB with the chapel of St Margaret (annexed to)	1427 (21 Mar) DN/Reg 5 bk 9 - Alnwick 1425-1439, f.149	Shardelowe, Ele de	1438, will of Andrew Byrd, of EB, rector Ref - Doke 4, NCC
Crowe, Thomas	1438	parish church of EB with the chapel of St Margaret (annexed to)	1438 (7 Aug) DN/ Reg 5 bk 10 - Brouns 1446-1445, f.17	Shardelowe, Robert	1444-1473 - listed as supervisor for various testators
Bosewell, William	1479- 1499	parish church of EB with chapel	1479 (22 Mar) DN/Reg 7 bk 12 - Goldwells 1472-1499, f.74v	Hopton, Thomas	1486-1494 - listed as supervisor for various testators 1499, will of Wm Bosewell, Ref - 50 Morton, 2, Lambeth
Hudson, William	1484				April 1484 - listed as parson of Easton in will of Thomas Hopton of Swillington, Yorks and manorial lord of Easton Bavents Ref - Prob Reg 5, f.288r, York Prerogative & Exchequer Courts
Langton, Edmund	1499				April 1499 - listed as rector for EB and parish chaplain of All Saints, Dunwich during Visitation Register of John Morton, p179
Hopton, John	1499	Church of EB on death of Boswell	1499 (1 May) Register of John Morton, p26	Sutherwell, Richard and Eyer, Thomas, merchant of London by virtue of grant of wardship of Arthur Hopton son and heir of George Hopton	Vicar of Reydon with Southwold, 1470-1503, also briefly Wenaston in 1474 Richmond,p135 Ref - <a href="https://venn.lib.cam.ac">https://venn.lib.cam.ac</a>
Osborne, Thomas	1501				1501, will of Sir Thomas Osborne, priest of EB Ref - Poppy 47, NCC
Thurne, John	1507	EB	1507 (2 Oct) DN/Reg 9 bk 15 - Nykke 1507-1514, f.62	not given	1508-1510 - listed as supervisor and witness for various testators
Wentworth, Thomas	n/k				1521 - death noted at institution of James Corton Ref - DN/Reg 9 bk 14 - Nykke 1503-1535, f.171
Corton, James	1521- 1523	EB	1521 (2 Jan) DN/Reg 9 bk 14 - Nykke 1503-1535, f.171	Hopton, Arthur, Sir	1523 - resignation noted at institution of Wm Sponer Ref - DN/Reg 9 bk 14 - Nykke 1503-1535, f.178

Sponer, William	1523- 1557	EB	1523 (24 Jan) DN/Reg 9 bk 14 - Nykke 1503-1535, f.178	Hopton, Arthur, Sir	1524-1555 - listed as supervisor and witness for various testators 1557, will of William Sponer, of EB, clerk Ref - <i>Hustinges</i> 43, NCC
Foxe, John	1562	parish church of EB	1562 (11 Jul) DN/Reg 13 bk 19 - Parkhurst 1559-1576, f.72	Hopton, Arthur, Sir	Also rector of South Cove, 1554-66 Vicar of Reydon with Southwold, 1555-66 Ref - <a href="https://venn.lib.cam.ac">https://venn.lib.cam.ac</a> Northales, 1563-1593 Ref - DN/Reg 13 bk 19 – Parkhurst 1559-1576
Blinkhorne, Edward	1590- 1591	rectory of the parish church of EB	1590 (11 Oct) DN/Reg 14 bk 20 - Freake, Scambler, Redman 1576-1602, f.190	Roberds, William, Sir	1591 - resignation noted at institution of Henry Watkins Ref - DN/Reg 14 bk 20 - Freake, Scambler, Redman 1576-1602, f.200
Watkins, Henry	1591- 1593	rectory of the parish church of EB	1591 (3 Oct) DN/Reg 14 bk 20 - Freake, Scambler, Redman 1576-1602, f.200	Roberds, William, Sir	Sequestration visitation of 1593 Ref - <i>DN/VIS</i> 2/2, 1593, NRO
Evans, Thomas	1597	rectory of EB	1597 (13 Aug) DN/Reg 14 bk 20 - Freake, Scambler, Redman 1576-1602, f.288	not given	
Selby, Robert	1607	rectory of EB	1607 (28 Sep) DN/Reg 15 bk 21 - Jegon, f.38 and 16 bk 22- Jegon, Overall & Harsnett, f.15	Bacon, Nathaniel and Dorothy his wife, guardian for William Roberds Smyth son and heir of William Smyth	
Garey, Samuel	1608	EB	1608 (27 Nov) DN/Reg 16 bk 22- Jegon, Overall & Harsnett, f.15	Bacon, Nathaniel and Dorothy his wife, guardian for William Roberds Smyth son and heir of William Smyth	Also rector of St Peter's, Denver, Nfk, 1608-17 Winfarthing, Nfk, 1610-21 Icklingham St James, 1621-1646 Preb. of Norwich, Nfk, 1620-1646 Died 1646 – buried Norwich cathedral Ref - <a href="https://venn.lib.cam.ac">https://venn.lib.cam.ac</a>
Seaman, Philip	1620				1620 - Noted as licensed as curate but record not found within register (possibly at Reydon) 1630-1636 - listed as witness for various testators
West, Thomas	c1646				1650 – Given as incumbent but has not preached at Easton for four years Ref - <i>Suffolk Inquisition</i> , COMM/12A/15 – Salisbury, f.560-561

Lewthwait, Richard	1666	Rectory of parish of EB	1666 (14 Jul) DN/Reg 19 bk 25A - Reynolds 1661-1671	Howland, Jeffrey Sir	
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Abbreviations – EB = Easton Bavents

Source – Norwich Diocese Institution Books, DN/REG/various, 1299-1671, NRO; Cambridge Alumni Database, <https://venn.lib.cam.ac>; Colin Richmond, *John Hopton: A Fifteenth Century Gentleman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Harper-Bill, Christopher, ed. *The Register of John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1486-1500: Volume III, Norwich Sede Vacante, 1499*. Canterbury and York Society 89. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000; Bond, 1302, HB26/412/724, SA; Various Easton Bavents wills – see Appendix 1; other wills individually referenced.

## Appendix 9 - Chronology of the formation of the broads at Easton Bavents and Covehithe, 1575-2011

### 1575 – Saxton’s map of Suffolk



Source – Christopher Saxton and W. L. D. Ravenhill, *Christopher Saxton's 16th Century Maps: The Counties of England and Wales* (Shrewsbury: Chatsworth Library, 1992).

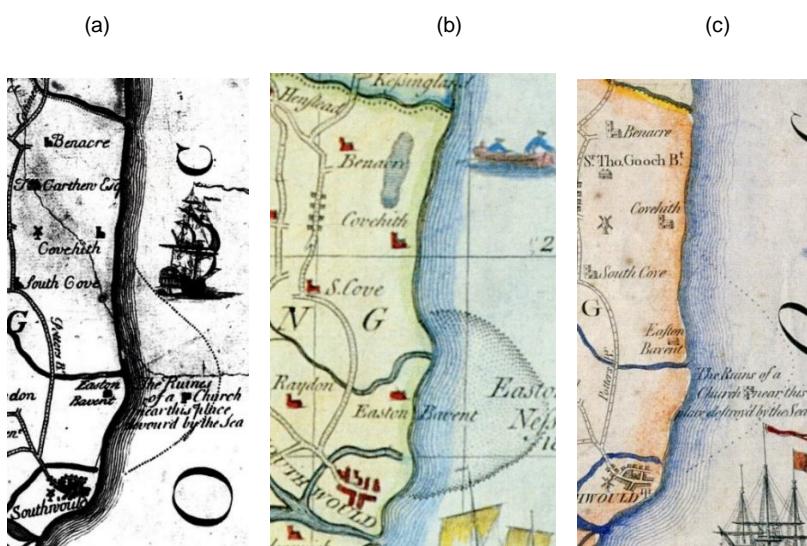
Shows a tadpole shaped piece of water the result of shingle/sand building up at haven mouth causing water to become enclosed.

**1575 through to 1730** – all the county maps of Suffolk depict the coastline as defined by Saxton and show the enclosed tadpole shaped area of water. Maps include, 1640 by Jansson, 1695 by Morden, 1724 by Moll and 1730 again by Morden.<sup>875</sup>

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<sup>875</sup> MC4/various, SA.

1736 - Kirby's maps of Suffolk, (a) 1736, (b) 1737 and (c) 1766



Source - David Dymond, ed., *John Kirby's Suffolk: His Maps And Roadbook*, Suffolk Records Society, XLVII (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004).

Kirby's survey of Suffolk was completed by 1735 and a volume of descriptive material entitled *The Suffolk Traveller* was published with the accompanying map being made available in 1736 with further editions following in 1737, 1764 and 1766.<sup>876</sup> A river was shown on the 1736 map at Easton, as flowing out to sea, with no evidence of the tadpole shaped area of enclosed water and a dotted outline of the 'now lost' ness was depicted with the legend 'the ruins of a Church near this place devoured by the sea'. Closer analysis of the area around Easton shown on the various engraving of Kirby's maps does however produce some anomalies which throw into doubt the accuracy of Kirby's surveying. Map (a) positioned Easton to the south of the river shown with no body of water lying between the Hundred river and the Blyth estuary at Southwold. Map (b) positioned Easton in the same location but showed a body of enclosed water to the east of Benacre. Map (c) positioned Easton north of the river flowing out to the sea from Potters Bridge and does not show the body of water near Benacre. It has been acknowledged that the surveying of the coastal area around Aldeburgh was confused and the difference between the editions in this area are probably accidental.<sup>877</sup> It is feasible that by the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century the sand and shingle bar enclosing the tadpole shaped water had been eroded away resulting in emptying the enclosed water but if this did happen it did not take long for the haven area to be blocked once more.

<sup>876</sup> Blatchly, *John Kirby's Suffolk: His Maps And Roadbook*.

<sup>877</sup> Blatchly, 241.

## 1783 – Hodskinson’s map of Suffolk



Source - David Dymond, ed., *The County Of Suffolk Surveyed By Joseph Hodskinson*, vol. XV, Suffolk Records Society (Ipswich: Suffolk Records Society, 1972).

When Joseph Hodskinson’s map of Suffolk was published in 1783, the result of seven years of surveying using new triangulation methods, including one at Dunwich, the area of Easton was delineated quite differently. Hodskinson’s map has been hailed as the most detailed and accurate available at the time of its publication and throws into question Kirby’s cartography.<sup>878</sup>

The houses of the parish of Easton Bavents are shown on a cliff edge which lowers to the north to beach level and two areas of enclosed water are shown before the land rises again where Covehithe parish is situated, with another area of water lying further to the north again. There are two areas of water lying to the south, separated by a small piece of land with one labelled as Easton Broad, another area of water is lying to the north, at Benacre and the land behind the areas of water is higher. The water south of Covehithe is shown as lying to the east of the roadway leading down from the church. The angle of the water correlates with the ‘tadpole’ shape of water as depicted on Saxton’s map of 1575 and it is clear that Easton and Covehithe Broads

<sup>878</sup> David Dymond, ed., *The County Of Suffolk Surveyed By Joseph Hodskinson*, vol. XV, Suffolk Records Society (Ipswich: Suffolk Records Society, 1972), 3.

developed from the enclosed water as the coastline eroded and the ‘tadpole’ separated. In 1783 surveying was undertaken for the Covehithe Enclosure Award which described the water as ‘part of a lake or piece of water called Covehithe Broad otherwise Easton Broad as lies in the said parish’.<sup>879</sup> These two bodies of water are described as coastal lagoons by academics including Natural England within their designation of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and within designation paperwork denoting them as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).<sup>880</sup>

### 1817 – Survey of the estate of Sir Thomas Gooch of Benacre



Source – Map of the Estate of Sir Thomas Gooch of Benacre, 1817, 61/3, SA.

This plan shows two areas of water separated by land. Covehithe broad water (no. 771) is shown as a small area of water with Easton broad (no. 875) a larger expanse

<sup>879</sup> Entry No. 9, Covehithe Enclosure Award, 1787-8, 150/1/5/9, SA.

<sup>880</sup> ‘Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’, National Landscapes Association, accessed 20 April 2021, <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/about-aonbs/aonbs/suffolk-coast-and-heaths>; R. S. K. Barnes, ‘Coastal Lagoons of East Anglia, U.K.’, *Journal of Coastal Research* 3, no. 4 (1987): 417–27.

of water with a stream shown emptying into it at its western edge. A belt of trees are also shown lying behind Easton Broad, on the higher ground.

### 1824 – Bryant's map of Suffolk



Source – Map of the County of Suffolk from actual survey by A. Bryant in the years of 1824 and 1825, HD345/1, SA.

Bryant's map illustrates the higher cliff sitting behind Easton broad and is similar to the Gooch estate plan. There is still an area of flat sandy land in front of Easton and Covehithe broads, with higher cliffs at either end. It appears that a small stream connects both pieces of water and that the higher ground at Covehithe which sat behind the water in Hodskinson's map is now on the coastal line.

1837 - Ordnance Survey map of Suffolk, 1 inch scale



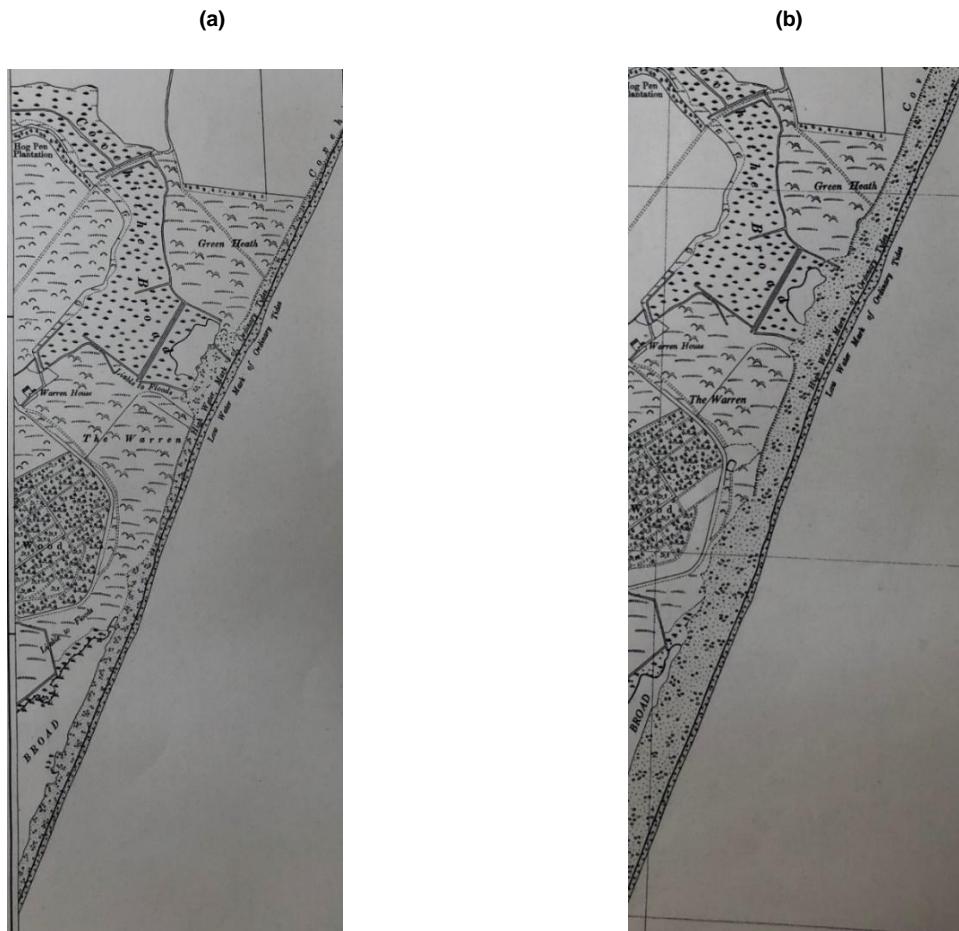
Source - J. B. Harley and Yolande O'Donoghue, *The Old Series Ordnance Survey Maps of England and Wales: Scale 1 Inch to 1 Mile: A Reproduction of the 110 Sheets of the Survey in Early State in 10 Volumes* (Kent: H. Margary, 1975).

The 1-inch ordnance survey maps were the first accurate maps available for the public to purchase and they used triangulation as an accurate framework from which

to undertake the surveys.<sup>881</sup> Covehithe Broad has reduced in size and receded backwards when compared with Hodskinson's map of 1783. Easton Broad has dried out at the west end when the position of the 'Keepers House' is compared with Bryant's map above. The woodland, now described at Half Round Cover is continuing to come closer to the coastline as the broad and beach are eroding.

This map also shows the valley which existed between the north and south heath areas of Easton Bavents and to the north between Benacre and Covehithe the eroded ness from Easton has built up. The Barnard sand (marked BAR) has also migrated further northwards

#### 1928 (a) and 1951 (b) –Ordnance Survey Maps, 6inch edition



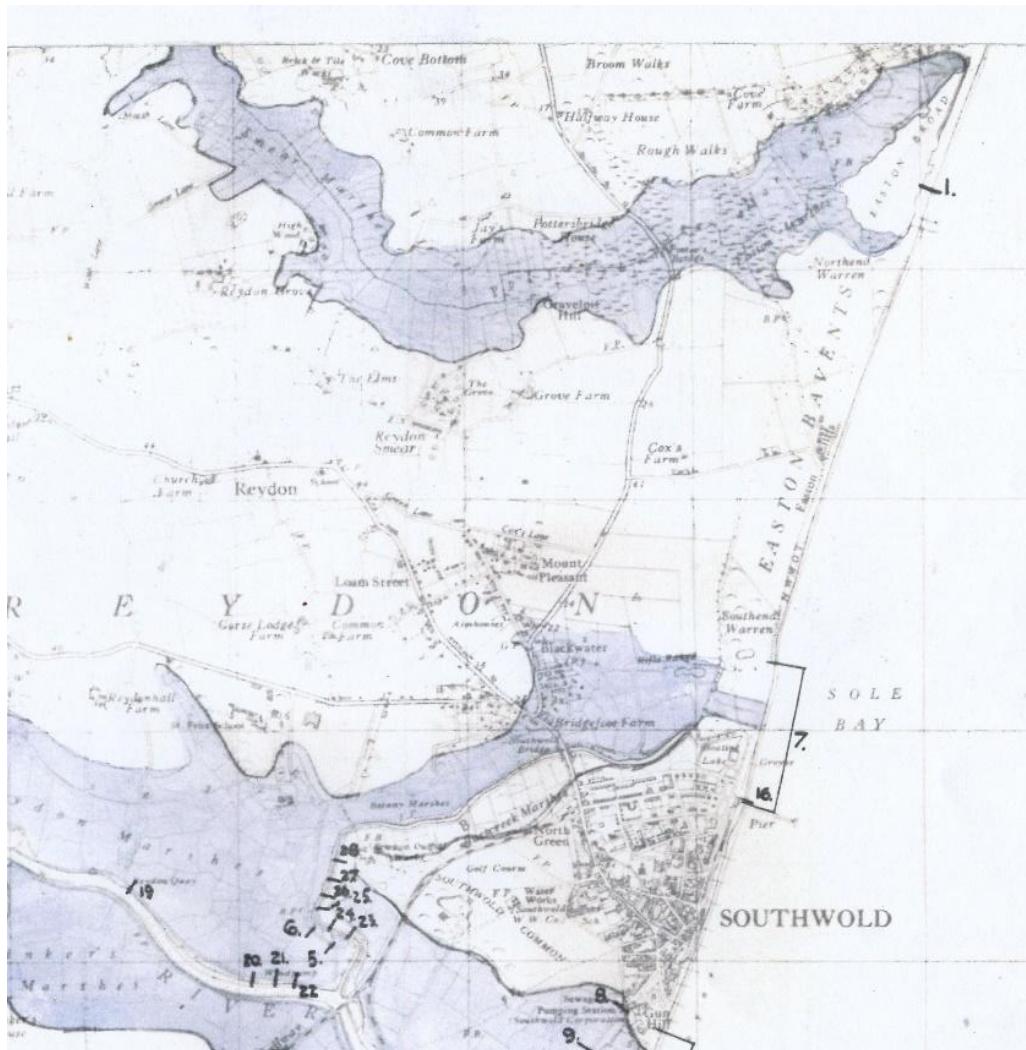
Source – Ordnance Survey maps, National Library of Scotland, <https://maps.nls.uk/os/>

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<sup>881</sup> 'Ordnance Survey History', Ordnance Survey, accessed 15 June 2024, <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/about/history>.

Covehithe Broad is still shown as a very small area of water. There is still low land lying to the north west of Easton broad which is shown as liable to flooding from the sea. By 1951, Easton Broad has retracted in size at its north-eastern edge.

## 1954 – Annotated map by P.J.O. Trist



Source – Annotated Ordnance Survey map, 62/47, March 1954, A2727/2/11, SA.

The coastal floods that occurred on the weekend of 31 January and 1 February 1953 were the worst natural disaster that Britain experienced in the twentieth century.<sup>882</sup> A combination of winds and high tides caused a rise in sea level in the North Sea and resulted in a surge of water devastating over 900 miles of coastline down the east

<sup>882</sup> Denise Parkinson, ed., *The Great Sea Floods of 1953; The Records of P.J.O. (John) Trist*, Suffolk Records Society, LXVII (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2024), ix.

coast of England. The extent of the flooding was recorded in detail at the time by P.J.O. Trist in his capacity as a county advisor within the National Agricultural Service, part of the Ministry of Agriculture. His maps and notebooks provide evidence of the flooding which had a devastating effect on the north-east section of the Suffolk coast under scrutiny. The flood surged through the shingle bank protecting Easton Broad, making a 30 yard break in it. It swept up over Potters Bridge and on to Frostenden Bottom, following the old glacial Easton river valley course.<sup>883</sup> At Buss Creek, on the Southwold/Easton border, the sea surged through and joined the extensive flooding which occurred within the Blyth estuary and its associated valley.

### 1977 – Pathfinder Ordnance Survey map



Source – Ordnance Survey, Pathfinder, 946, TM48/58, Beccles (South), 1:25,000, 1977

Covehithe Broad is now shown as a large area of contained water, flooding back into the old glacial path as shown on the 1884 geological map. The position of the broad

<sup>883</sup> Parkinson, 29.

when compared to Covehithe Church and the 1 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1837 clearly indicates how far west the broad has receded. The higher ground of Easton Wood, previously called Half Round Cover is shown with only a small area of sand and beach lying at its base.

#### **1995 – Aerial Photograph of Easton Broad and 2011 – Ordnance Survey map**

Easton Broad has greatly reduced in size and has not receded backwards within the valley area towards Potter's Bridge. Covehithe Broad however has remained static. Both have man-made shingle banks built up in front for protection from high tides. The higher area of Easton Wood now ends in a cliff edge dropping down to the beach.



Source – ADAS Ltd. Aerial Photography, 1:10,000, 29-9-1995, Run - 683. Frame 113.



Source – OS Explorer, Southwold & Bungay, 231, 1: 25,000, 2011

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NRA17140/Russell Box 793 The Russell (Dukes of Bedford) Collection  
(uncatalogued section)

### **Borthwick Institute**

Prob Reg 5 Probate Register

### **British Library (BL)**

Add MS 19080	Collections For A History Of Suffolk By David Elisha Davy
Add MS 31315	Chart of the Atlantic Coastline by Benincasa
Add MS 42097	Plan of East Field, Kessingland
Add MS 48381	Terrier of the Augustinian Priory of Blythburgh, Suffolk
Add MS 48382	Rental of the Possessions of Blythburgh Priory
Add Roll 40707	Recognitions of Debt, Dunwich
Cotton Augustus, Claudius and Domitian	The Cotton Manuscripts
Harley 595 ii f.169	Returns of the Diocese of Norwich, 1603

### **Cambridge University Library (CUL)**

GBR/0012/MS Doc.1548	Mr Playter's Particulars
GBR/0269/DCAR/1/1/1/2/3b	Conveyance re Dunwich and Westleton estate

### **East Sussex Record Office**

AMS 5592	Mediaeval deeds of the Herstmonceux Castle Estate from the Barrett-Lennard archive
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### **Hatfield House Archives and Collections**

Cecil Papers 142/98

Plan of Southwold

### **Lambeth Palace Archives**

COMM/12a

Commonwealth Records, Copies of Surveys

Reg Morton 2

Archbishops Register

### **Norfolk Record Office (NRO)**

COL

Colman Collection

DN

Diocese of Norwich Records

DN/Reg - various

- Institution registers (DNIR)

DN/MSC

- Miscellaneous

DN/SEQ

- Sequestration

DN/VAL

- Valuation

DN/VIS

- Visitation

MC 1370/10, 810X1

Miscellaneous Collection, Account of fines received  
by Dorothy Bacon

PRCC 1/2

Norwich Consistory Court Probate Records: Will  
Registers

PRCC 2/2

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Y/C

Great Yarmouth Borough Collection

### **Southwold Museum**

Volume D

Gooding Collection

### **Suffolk Archives (SA)**

43/L:2526

Lothingland Rural District Council Plans Register

110/D1/1

Benacre Parish Register

119/D1/1

Covehithe Parish Register

146/D1/1

South Cove Parish Register

150/1/5/9

Covehithe Enclosure Award

153/D1/1	Southwold Parish Register
741/HA12/C11	Adair Family of Flixton
741/HA12/E1	
841	Papers of Alan Farquhar Bottomley
889/3	Evidences of title, Suffolk
1309:1779/Gooch	Cross and Ram Collection (uncatalogued)
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FC/185	Walberswick Parish Records
FE1	Probate Inventories
HA11	Rouse Family Archive
HA30/50	Blois Family Archive
HA30/312	
HB26/412	Cross and Ram Collection
HD11	Redstone Collection
HD603	Claude Morley Collection
HD1643	Gwen Dyke Collection
HD2448/1/1/Various	Peter Northeast Will Transcripts
IC/AA1, 2, 5, 6	Ipswich Probate Registry Records, Archdeaconry of Suffolk, original wills, will registers, indexes of administrations, act books
IC/500	Archdeaconry of Sudbury Probate Registers
MC4	Map collection
T631	Gooch Papers, Temporary Collection, (uncatalogued)
V5/19/1-3	Manorial Records of the Dukes of Bedford

### **The National Archives (TNA)**

C 1	Court of Chancery Pleadings
C 66	Chancery and Supreme Court of Judicature: Patent Rolls
CP 40	Court of Common Pleas: Plea Rolls Indices
E 31/1/3	Little Domesday: Suffolk
E 122	Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: Particulars of Customs Accounts

E 159/350/336	English Port Survey, Suffolk Section
E 178	Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: Special Commissions of Inquiry
E 179	Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: Particulars of Account and other records relating to Lay and Clerical Taxation
E 190	Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: Port Books
E 301	Court of Augmentations: Certificates of Colleges, Chantries and Similar Foundations
E 310	Court of Augmentations, and Exchequer, Pipe Office: Particulars for Crown Leases
E 315	Court of Augmentations and Predecessors and Successors: Miscellaneous Books
E 321	Court of Augmentations and Court of General Surveyors: Legal Proceedings
E 368	Exchequer: Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer: Memoranda Rolls
HCA 13	High Court of Admiralty: Instance and Prize Courts: Examinations and Answers
MPF 1/138	Maps and plans extracted to flat storage from records of the State Paper Office
PROB	Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury
SC 2	Special Collections: Court Rolls
SC 6	Special Collections: Ministers' and Receivers' Accounts
SC12	Special Collections: Rentals and Surveys
SP 1	State Papers, Henry VIII: General Series
SP 16	Secretaries of State: State Papers Domestic, Charles I
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WARD	Court of Wards and Liveries: Deeds and Evidences

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